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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Iraq backs down, but threat remains

Guardian Reporters

THE United States and Britain have vowed to bomb Iraq if President Saddam Hussein does not keep his promise to permit unconditional weapons inspections, as the world breathed a sigh of relief that last weekend's air strikes had been aborted at the 11th hour.

As details emerged of the knife-edge climbdown, secured only after US bombers had taken off for their targets, Washington and London insisted that there must now be full compliance by Baghdad to destroy its banned weapons.

President Bill Clinton said: "Iraq agreed to meet the demands of the international community to co-operate fully with the United Nations weapons inspectors. Iraq has backed down, but that is not enough. Now Iraq must live up to its obligations. Until we see complete compliance we will remain vigilant, keep up the pressure and be ready to act."

Britain's Tony Blair echoed the US president, saying Britain remained "ready, willing and able" to launch air strikes without warning.

But for all the tough talk, the US and Britain have little more freedom to act alone than they had before Iraq broke off all co-operation with the UN Special Commission, Unscom, on October 31. That violation of February's agreement with the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, made it hard for Russia, France, China and others to oppose military action. But if Iraq is again co-operating, that opposition will return, and pressure will mount to ease sanctions.

US and British sources made clear that Unscom inspectors, who started returning to Iraq on Tuesday, would be conducting highly intrusive searches for banned chemical and biological weapons as soon as they got back to work.

In Baghdad, the vice-president, Taha Yassin Ramadan, said his country would pursue its struggle to get sanctions lifted. "The leadership of the Ba'ath party and the revolution . . . has decided to continue efforts with all means to confront the American threats and to lift the siege," he declared.

In Washington and London there was unconcealed triumph at the scale of Iraq's retreat after its first highly qualified letter arrived at the UN last Saturday. "We squeezed out two more letters, each clarifying in ever more abject terms the unconditional nature of the climbdown," one official crowed.

International divisions were highlighted after a marathon session of the UN Security Council last Saturday failed to reach a consensus on Iraq's latest move.

Long-term problems remain, though Mr Clinton's announcement that the US would now work actively for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein signalled a significant change in Washington's strategy.

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Iraqi women wave portraits of Saddam Hussein to show support for their leader amid tension in Baghdad over the threat of a military attack PHOTOGRAPH: KARIM SAHIB

Washington's deadly soap opera

COMMENT
Paul Rogers

WHILE the primary aim of Saddam Hussein's regime is to stay in power, its longer-term aim is to rebuild its status as a major regional force. Among many policies required to achieve these aims, two stand out — to end United Nations sanctions and to maintain the ability to deploy weapons of mass destruction, especially biological weapons.

Until very recently, the United States was prepared to rely primarily on the UN weapons inspectors (Unscom) and the maintenance of sanctions to counter both policies. Unscom would work to control the weapons programmes while sanctions would keep the regime in a thoroughly weakened state. Whatever its public rhetoric, Washington was intent on maintaining sanctions at least until the regime collapsed.

In the recent weeks US policy has undergone a profound shift, having effectively given up on Unscom. It now envisages a harsh process of containment, not least through the use of strong military force to strike at the heart of the regime — its élite forces, intelligence and communications organisations, and its weapons industries. Weeks of bomber and cruise missile strikes were being planned to bring the regime to its knees.

While much of the change in policy stems from Bill Clinton's relief from domestic pressures after the mid-term election successes, it also follows the experience of the last major crisis nine months ago. The Iraqi regime survived that crisis intact, having had time to disperse and conceal key aspects of its biological warfare infrastructure, but it was required to accept a continuing and intrusive inspection regime.

During the summer and early autumn, Iraq progressively interfered with the weapons inspections and, by the time of the US elections, Unscom was effectively defunct. Saddam was most likely expecting an election outcome that would further weaken Clinton, enabling Iraq to gather more support for the relief of sanctions. But he miscalculated in three ways.

First, the election went Clinton's way, enabling him to turn his attention to international issues. Second, the US began at last to put some pressure on Israel, relieving some of the anti-American tensions in the Gulf. Finally, Gulf oil producers, burdened by low oil prices, could see some advantage in a renewed war with Iraq bringing a price surge, as the regime was crippled.

The result was the US action that was planned to start early on Saturday last week — a military campaign exceeding any of the raids of recent years. It is even likely that it would have been larger than the raids planned last February but averted by the intervention of the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan. Those raids were expected to last a month, with up to 1,500 civilian casualties.

At the last minute, Saddam realised his mistake and offered just enough of a climbdown to force Clinton to recall the bombers, while falling far short of a complete capitulation. The US, along with Britain, is left with an escalating military momentum but a lack of international agreement. Even so, with Clinton cancelling his Asian tour, it is by no means certain that military strikes will be avoided.

The seven-year programme of sanctions is simply not working. The regime remains in place, with its élite of up to a million people doing remarkably well, not least through the proceeds of massive oil smuggling operations. Meanwhile the experience of millions of ordinary Iraqis is dire, with at least 6,000 children dying every month

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Le Monde diplomatique: special offer

Patrick Ensor, Editor

THANKS to your very positive response to the first two trial issues, we are pleased to announce a partnership with Le Monde diplomatique that will make available to our readers an English language version of this leading French monthly.

Starting in January 1999, we will start publishing Le Monde diplomatique on a monthly basis, distributing it with the Guardian Weekly to all those subscribers happy to pay extra to receive it. It is only available as a joint subscription. See the special offer on page 3 of the November Diplo, inside this week's paper.

To discover your views about this new venture — and ensure that the English version of Le Monde diplomatique meets your needs — this issue contains a readers' survey. I hope you can find the time to answer a few questions on page 17.

We would like to make Le Monde diplomatique available to all those who get their Guardian Weekly from a news vendor. Regrettably it is not yet feasible to do so. But the special offer is very good value, and I hope you choose to take out a joint subscription, or enhance your current subscription.

We are exploring new ways to ensure subscriber copies of the Weekly reach readers as fast as possible. If you have any problems or concerns that you would like to raise about delivery, please contact Steve Clarke, our subscriptions manager (see address on page 2) or e-mail him at: gwsubs@guardian.co.uk

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Chileans delighted to see Pinochet's past exposed

MOST of the population in Chile is extremely happy about General Pinochet's troubles. The exceptions are the right wing, which supports the former dictator, and the government which is making every effort to bring him back in order to placate the military.

One has to accept that the government's claim for parliamentary immunity for Pinochet is also a legal argument given that he is a senator of the republic. But deep in the heart of the majority (and that surely includes the president and the governing parties) everyone is happy that the whole world has seen Pinochet and his then government for what they were — a criminal in charge of a terrorist state.

It is good to remember that when Pinochet took up his post as senator, the president made a public speech in which he said that "although it was against his principles we all have to accept it because it was a constitutional right".

Even the main rightwing candidate for the presidency, Joaquin Lavin, is suggesting that Pinochet should retire from political life to allow for reconciliation in Chile. However, no reconciliation is possible without justice being seen to be done. And so far only a handful of criminals that belonged to the armed forces, including Manuel Contreras, the head of Pinochet's political police (the DINA), and Pedro Espinoza, head of the *Carabineros* (civil police) have been punished.

But both Contreras and Espinoza only received six years' imprisonment for ordering the murder of three political opponents. In any other country, these horrendous crimes would have warranted life sentences.

Bringing Pinochet to justice under international law would set an ethical precedent for other heads of state who develop their policies through terror.

Sergio León Balza,
Santiago, Chile

IN PORTRAYING Pinochet as a victim, Charles Krauthammer (November 1) displays an advanced form of selective amnesia. He hopes we cannot remember what happened to the last democratically elected Chilean government or who was behind its downfall.

Of course the United States doesn't want Pinochet put on trial and has been putting pressure on the UK and Spain to prevent this.

Krauthammer remembers Tiananman Square, but has forgotten the 700,000 people who died in the US bombing of Cambodia. He remembers the Spanish conquest 500 years ago, but forgets the genocide of his own native people. He remembers the violence in El Salvador, but not who propped up and armed its terrorist government. He remembers that international law is mocked in Kosovo and Iraq, but not in Israel and Indonesia. And he neglects to mention that the US has made a major contribution towards all this chaos.

John Orford,
Misamis Oriental, Philippines

CHARLES Krauthammer talks of Pinochet as a "victim" — a rather bad joke which shows a lack of respect for the true victims of his regime, none of whom ever had access to a fair trial.

The suggestion that Spain has no moral authority to judge anybody, given its colonial past, is unfair. With regard to General Franco (who died 23 years ago), Mr Krauthammer should know that even during the worst spell of his dictatorship, in the 1940s, it was never as bloody as Pinochet's regime.

Nevertheless, it is not "Spain" which would prosecute, but Judge Baltasar Garzón, who, incidentally, has just sent an ex-minister to prison for his role in the "dirty war" waged by the Spanish government against ETA 15 years ago. Mr Krauthammer should be better informed before referring to Spain's amnesia.

If Mr Krauthammer questions Judge Garzón's moral authority because he is Spanish, equally he should question himself, remembering that the US has been an enthusiastic practitioner of state terrorism. Perhaps Mr Krauthammer is worried that if Pinochet is prosecuted, we will find out about the "inappropriate relationship" between the dictator and the CIA, which brought Pinochet to power.

Francho Beltrán,
Zaragoza, Spain

Hondurans rally to disaster

MITCH has been the worst hurricane of this century in Central America. In five days there was as much rain in Honduras as we normally receive in two years. The rainfall is measured in feet rather than inches. Tegucigalpa, the capital, is devastated. Whole neighbourhoods have been washed away; businesses too. And of the nine bridges connecting the two halves of the city, only one is left. More than 800,000 people live in Tegucigalpa. Many of the poorest live in tiny shacks perched on the hill sides. These have been washed away. Food and water is running short.

The whole country has suffered landslides, as the already wet soil became wetter in the continuous rain. About 50-70 per cent of the crops have been lost. No one knows how many people have been killed, nor what the real damage is. Many towns are still cut off, with roads blocked or destroyed, and bridges swept away.

But the estimates are 1 million forced out of their homes, out of 6 million people in the country. They are gathered in refuges, which are running out of food.

But out of all the horror, it is inspiring to see how people are really organised. Each town has an emergency committee, everyone is working together to rescue others, but they desperately need food, medicine and supplies. Hondurans here in Ocotepeque are already sending food and money to help the people in other parts of the country. But the help that Hondurans can give is just not enough to meet the incredible damage the country has suffered.

Clare Creo,
Ocotepeque, Honduras

Catholic concerns

LAST month I wrote an article in the Tablet about the role of Catholic independent education. I believed it was thoughtful, even provocative. What it was not was "a coded attack on wealthy Catholics who choose to send their children to high-profile [non-Catholic] public schools" (Catholic tastes, November 8).

In the Tablet, I refer to the trend among some liberal-minded Catholics towards intercommunion with other churches (a violation of Catholic discipline), and to the situation in one Anglican school where some Catholics receive the Eucharist. "Taken together," I wrote, "it may be suggested, such developments do not reflect the considered and principled ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council and the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, but a shallow sentimental approach to the church, and the impact of the secularising forces of our society." In your report this has become: "Fr Leo accuses Catholic parents of a shallow sentimental approach to their church." The reality shift is enough to make you dizzy.

You referred misleadingly to falling numbers. In fact, our families come from all over the country, and Ampleforth has just had the biggest entry overall in 10 years. Our 13+ entry has shot upwards, and inquiries about the school have risen by 30 per cent in the last year.

The Rev Leo Chamberlain,
Headmaster,
Ampleforth College, Yorks

Lille is lost in translation

I WAS surprised to read the letter from Anthony Maye (November 1). The original name of Lille is not Rijsel. The first time the name of my native town appeared in a manuscript is in the Grande Charte granted by Count Baudin in 1066. In that document we can read "Isla", a word of Latin origin which means island. Lille was still written L'Isle in the 13th century.

Rijsel is only a Flemish translation of Lille, just as on the other side of Bruges and Ypres are French translations of the original Brugge and Ieper. Moreover, the people of Lille never spoke Flemish in the Middle Ages. That does not diminish in any way the value of the Flemish culture and language, but it is not advisable to play with facts.

Georges Poulet,
Corbrieux, France

Briefly

WHAT Edward Said left out of his bitter account of how Arafat betrayed his people by signing the Wye Accord (November 15) is how the negotiations were effectively conducted on behalf of the Palestinians by the Americans. To induce what minimal concessions were on offer, the US gave assurances of the security of Israel far greater than the ones extracted by Menachem Begin at Camp David. More importantly, the US promised among other things that it will not "adopt any position or express any view" about the size of the next Israeli withdrawal, if any, and "will oppose" a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

S E Sanbar,
London

PETER PRESTON is trying to get rid of the US president before his time: there will be "no more Clinton any which way two years this week" (November 8). Barring death, resignation or removal by impeachment, the US Constitution guarantees him being in office until January 20, 2001.

R Tyler Warfield,
Kyoto, Japan

I TRUST I was not alone in being angered by Martin Woollacott's description of the recent grenade attack on a bus queue in Beersheba as a "fairly minor attack" (November 1). I'm sure a similar incident in the UK would not have been dismissed so lightly.

John Honig,
Cogee, New South Wales, Australia

REFERRING to your article "Canadians apologise for abuse" (November 8), the heading is wrong! The United Church of Canada is different from Canadians. It also perpetuates a belief that native Indians are not Canadians.

Alan Lupin,
University of British Columbia, Canada

THE problem of describing the USA's citizens is due to "The United States of America" being a description, or label, rather than a name. However, the solution is quite simple: they can call themselves "US"; we call them "THEM".

Guy English,
Pittsford, New York, USA

IS IT a symbol of European integration that the French finance minister has a German family name (Dominique Strauss-Kahn), and his German counterpart a French one (Oskar Lafontaine)?

Michael Thompson
Sutton, Surrey

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Habibie calls for calm amid protests

John Gittings in Jakarta

INDONESIA'S president, B J Habibie, has urged protesting students to "avoid anarchy" and accept that transition to democracy will take time.

In a nationwide appeal, Mr Habibie expressed his condolences for the 14 or more killed during the recent protests, and promised that those responsible — including members of the security forces — would be punished.

But any chance of a positive response from the protesters was undercut by an earlier police round-up of 10 opposition politicians, for questioning under a law which covers treason.

Although they were later released, the attorney-general said they were suspected of "instigating the people's movement". Students responded by staging a few small demonstrations, while thousands of Jakarta homes flew flags at half-mast in mourning for those shot by troops last week. Most of the dead were students, although four were pro-government vigilantes killed by an angry crowd. The Jakarta Red Cross says six students are still missing.

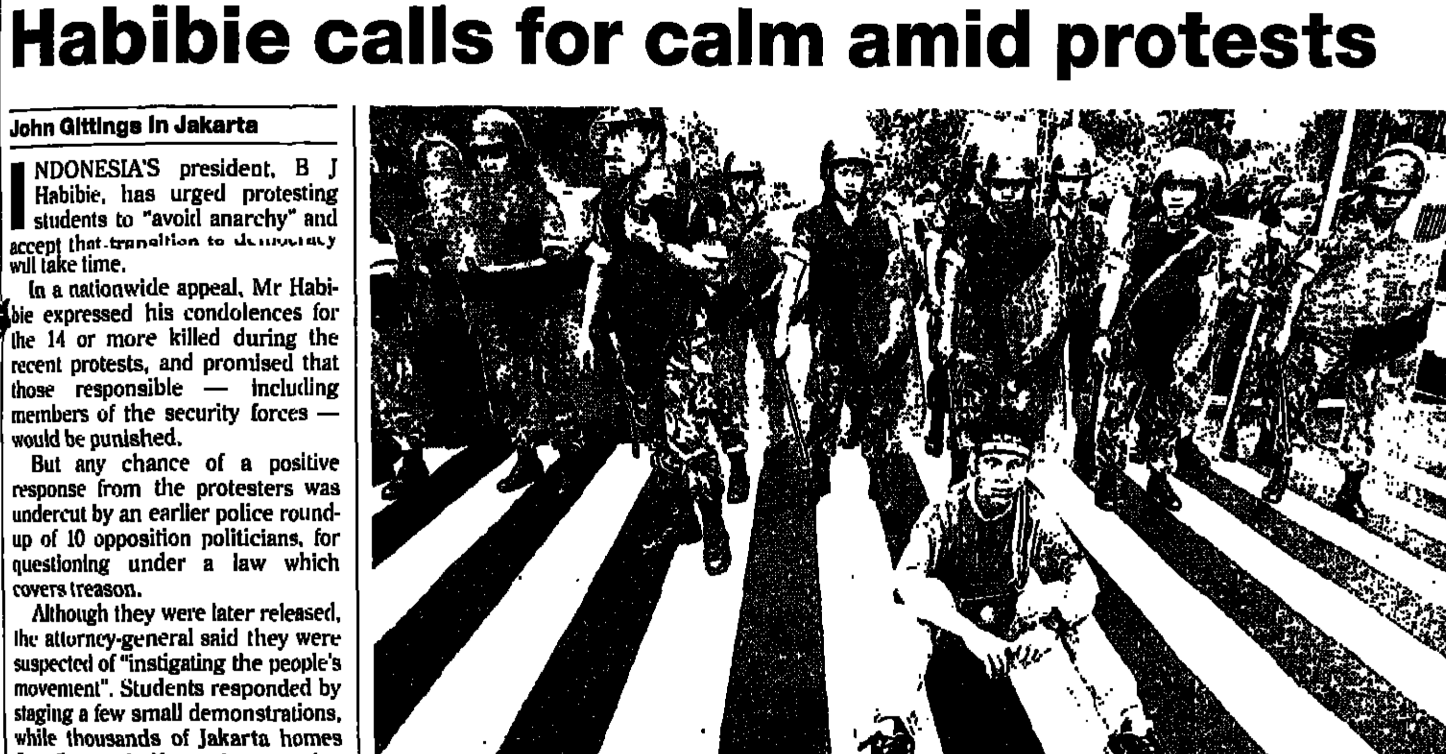
Mr Habibie said the main demands of the students for reform had been met in the decrees passed by the People's Consultative Assembly. But students last week mocked a report from the attorney-general which said that former president Suharto — whom they wish to see put on trial for corruption — was far less wealthy than has been reported in the media.

Mr Habibie still has considerable resources on his side. Most of the old political establishment know if he goes, they will fall with him. The armed forces under Gen Wiranto share a mutual interest with Mr Habibie in maintaining power. And Muslim fundamentalists hope to secure concessions in return for their support.

Sympathetic observers of the student movement warn that public opinion was initially less favourable than in May to their demonstrations last week.

Many people believed that the Habibie government should be given a chance, although this view has been severely jolted by the army's behaviour.

The round-up included Sukmati Sukarnoputri, a daughter of the first Indonesian president, two retired army generals and several prominent critics. All had signed a statement last week calling on Mr Habibie to resign in favour of a transitional government and for elections to be held immediately.



A protester sits in front of Indonesian soldiers blocking one of Jakarta's roads PHOTOGRAPH: VITASARI

Hague tribunal jails three for torture

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Chris Bird in Belgrade

A BOSNIAN Croat prison camp warden and two Muslims were imprisoned by the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague this week for a reign of terror that included the murder and torture of Serbs during the Bosnian war.

But the panel of three judges acquitted a Muslim military commander after ruling that he did not have command and control of Celebici camp, in central Bosnia, in 1992.

Human rights lawyers suggested that the judgment against the Bosnian Croat commander, Zdravko Mucic, would reinforce the principle of "command responsibility" set during the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals, which convicted Nazi and Japanese officers for the crimes of their subordinates.

However, the failure to make the same principle stick to the Muslim commander, Zejnil Delalic, could have implications for the prosecution of other war crime suspects, who could argue that they were not sufficiently connected to the atrocities committed by their subordinates.

Mr Delalic told the court: "Let me thank you for a just and fair judgment. I think it is a very wise judgment and a very courageous one . . . [it] has even increased my trust in this institution."

The Australian prosecutor, Grant Niemann, immediately announced an appeal against his acquittal.

The judges decided that Mucic, aged 43, was commander of the camp, and sentenced him to seven years in jail for 11 breaches of the Geneva convention. They said he had command and control of guards who committed nine murders, tortured six victims, and caused suffering and serious injury to four inmates.

The judgment said Mucic had been "clearly derelict" in his duty. He had allowed those under his authority to commit the most heinous of offences, without taking disciplinary action.

Mucic, wearing dark sunglasses and with a gold cross on a chain around his neck, was seen to smile as the sentence was pronounced.

The 500-page judgment said: "He was the person with the primary responsibility for the conditions in which prisoners were kept. The trial chamber is appalled by the inadequacy of the food and water supplies and medical and sleeping facilities . . . as well as the atmosphere of terror."

Two Muslim soldiers were also convicted. Mucic's deputy, Hazim Delic, aged 34, was given 20 years in jail for 13 counts of breaches of the convention, including two murders and two rapes, and the use of electric shock treatment on inmates.

"We have been appalled by the details of your criminal actions," the presiding judge, Adolphus Karibi-Whyte of Nigeria, told Delic. "You displayed a singular brutality in causing the deaths of two men . . . and calculating cruelty in the torture and mistreatment of many others."

The fourth defendant, a prison guard, Esad Landzo, aged 19 at the time, admitted 17 counts, including three killings and the torture of three other inmates in the camp, and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

The court said the sentence reflected his youth, impressionability and immaturity, but added: "The nature of his crimes is suggestive of . . . a perverse pleasure in the infliction of pain and suffering."

The case, which has lasted 19 months, is the first to involve Muslims rather than Serbs, but it is only the second which has resulted in convictions after a trial.

Those convicted will serve their punishment in any third country willing to hold them, most likely in Scandinavia.

Deadly US soap opera

Continued from page 1

from malnutrition. But there are huge dangers in taking massive military action against Saddam's regime. One of Iraq's most remarkable achievements in the 1980s was to build up a comprehensive biological warfare programme in just five years, so much so that at the time of the 1991 war it had missiles and bombs, armed with anthrax and botulinum, ready to use if the regime were threatened with destruction.

Even with the undoubted successes of the Unscom inspections, Iraq is well-nigh certain to have a hidden biological warfare capability that would be used if US military action began to strike at the heart of the regime. Put bluntly, a second Gulf war could all too easily get out of control.

This was exactly what happened with a major war-game at the US naval war college a couple of years ago. In that scenario, the Iraqi regime's survival was threatened, it used biological weapons to great effect, and the US retaliated with a nuclear strike.

It is possible that last weekend's events have given us a breathing space. If so, a further crisis with all its potential dangers will only be avoided if there is a change of policy towards Iraq. The whole sanctions programme has to be reviewed, with a revised system developed that relieves the pressure on the great majority of the Iraqi people, not least through a greatly increased but externally managed food-for-oil scheme.

Sanctions should be concentrated on the regime itself and its supporting élite, focusing, for example, on its finances, specialised imports, transport and travel, and probably including a total no-fly zone to hinder its internal operations. This will require much regional support, which will in turn only be possible if the Middle East peace process gets fully back on track.

While there is no guarantee that this will work, it is a much wiser course of action than risking a war that could easily escalate out of control.

Iraq is a prototype of the kind of conflict likely to face us in the coming decades. Weapons proliferation is now making it easier for weak states to stand up to strong ones. Crises involving weapons of mass destruction are likely to occur and, as with Iraq, it is dangerous to assume that such crises are readily amenable to military solutions. At a time when the US sees itself as the world's sole superpower, it may actually be starting to lose control.

The post-cold war world demands fundamental rethinking of our ideas about international security. There is little evidence that this has begun. Even so, if a way can be found to handle the Iraq crisis without a potentially disastrous resort to force, it might give us experience that will be invaluable in approaching the disorderly world of the early 21st century.

Paul Rogers is professor of peace studies at Bradford university.

Kurdish rebel seeks safe haven in Italy

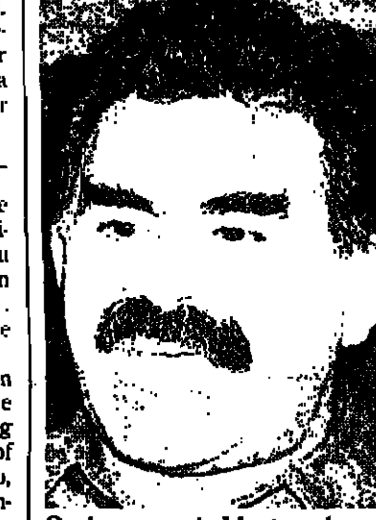
Foreign staff

ITALY came under intense pressure this week to extradite Turkey's most wanted man.

Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK, the Kurdish separatist party in Turkey, surrendered to Italian police after landing at Rome airport last week. He is believed to have been taken ill shortly after his arrest. Italian officials have refused to confirm his whereabouts.

In a letter in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica, Mr Ocalan said that his mission was "not war but dialogue with Turkey, Europe and the United States. What we have done is maybe a little premature, but it is a political step towards opening dialogue for peace."

Mr Ocalan has led a 14-year campaign for self-rule in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey, in one of the most violent conflicts to have troubled the region. Some 29,000 people have died



Ocalan: arrested last week

in clashes between his supporters and Turkish security forces.

Italy's communist justice minister, Oliviero Diliberto, must confirm Mr Ocalan's arrest next week. If he does, he then has to decide whether to accede to Turkey's request for extradition.

Several senior members of Italy's month-old government, which includes Marxist ministers for the first time in 50 years, are in favour of granting Mr Ocalan asylum.

The legal wrangle over Mr Ocalan's fate is complicated because Italy abolished the death penalty after the second world war and its constitution forbids extradition to countries such as Turkey where the death penalty is still in force.

An added complication is the seizure by Turkish prisoners in an Istanbul jail of an Italian inmate in a bid to force Mr Ocalan's extradition. One prisoner said the Italian would be held hostage until Italy agreed to hand over the Kurdish guerrilla.

Several hundred Kurds were seen crossing the border from Switzerland near the northern city of Como on their way to Rome to join the demonstration outside Celio hospital.

More than 1,000 Kurds also marched through Bonn in support of Mr Ocalan.

Gore lectures leaders on Asian democracy

John Gittings

THE United States vice-president, Al Gore, got off to a sticky start at the Asian-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Kuala Lumpur on Monday when he offended his Malaysian hosts in a banquet speech which backed the pro-democracy reform movement.

Developing President Bill Clinton's argument that democracies are better at solving economic crises, Mr Gore, who was standing in for Mr Clinton, chose a punchline that invoked the spirit of Malaysia's ex-finance minister, Anwar Ibrahim. The speech enraged his hosts.

"From Thailand to South Korea, Eastern Europe to Mexico, democracies have done better in coping with economic crises than nations where freedom is suppressed," he said to an audience including the prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad.

"And so, among nations suffering economic crises, we continue to hear calls for democracy and reform in many languages. People's power, *doi moi*, *reformasi*.

"We hear them today — right here, right now — among the brave people of Malaysia," Mr Gore said.

Dr Mahathir, a vocal proponent of so-called Asian values, was overheard saying: "I've never seen anybody so rude."

"People's power" evokes the Philippines' anti-Marcos revolution and *doi moi* is the Vietnamese term for perestroika. Last weekend supporters of Mr Anwar were hosed by fire engines when they shouted "reformasi" in Kuala Lumpur.

While several leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum have made clear their distaste at the apparent political motivation behind Mr Anwar's detention on charges of corruption and sodomy, Mr Gore's heavy rhetoric was a world apart from the Asian way of expressing criticism. Malaysian officials will consequently be able to dismiss it as "Western lecturing". Mr Clinton's absence will also send out the wrong signals.

Mr Gore's speech distracted attention from the one piece of good news at the summit: a new $10 billion package to revitalise the Asian economy. The US will contribute $5 billion, matching the same sum from Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank jointly.

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Israel halts West Bank withdrawal

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

ISRAEL on Monday suspended its commitment to give territory back to the Palestinians, saying that their leader, Yasser Arafat, must first publicly retract a pledge to declare statehood next May.

The announcement came as the country's foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, urged Jewish settlers to grab more West Bank land to keep it out of Palestinian hands.

"Everyone should take action, should run, should grab more hills. We'll expand the area. Whatever is seized will be ours. Whatever isn't seized will end up in their hands. That's the way it will be . . . That's what must be done now," Mr Sharon said last Sunday.

His comments were quickly followed by an announcement in parliament by the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, that the army's withdrawal from part of the West Bank, due to start this week, was being suspended.

These declarations are the latest hostilities in the war of words that has raged since Mr Arafat and Mr Netanyahu signed a "land-for-security" pact last month, after talks at the Wye River plantation in Maryland brokered by the United States.

The accord envisaged Israel withdrawing from 13 per cent of the West Bank over a three-month period to be completed by the end of January. Both sides had pledged to avoid "unilateral actions", but Israel has announced that construction of a big Jewish neighbourhood in annexed east Jerusalem will begin — a move condemned by Washington.

Last weekend Mr Arafat told Palestinian supporters at a West Bank rally that come what may, he would declare a Palestinian state on May 4, when the five-year-old Oslo interim accords expire.

Mr Arafat added that Jerusalem would be the capital and that "our rifle is ready" to defend the city, which has been in Israel's hands since the 1967 war. Around 200,000 Palestinians live in east Jerusalem.

Mr Netanyahu, in a speech frequently interrupted by hecklers, told the Knesset: "I do not intend to implement any withdrawal under these circumstances . . . until these things are corrected in public."

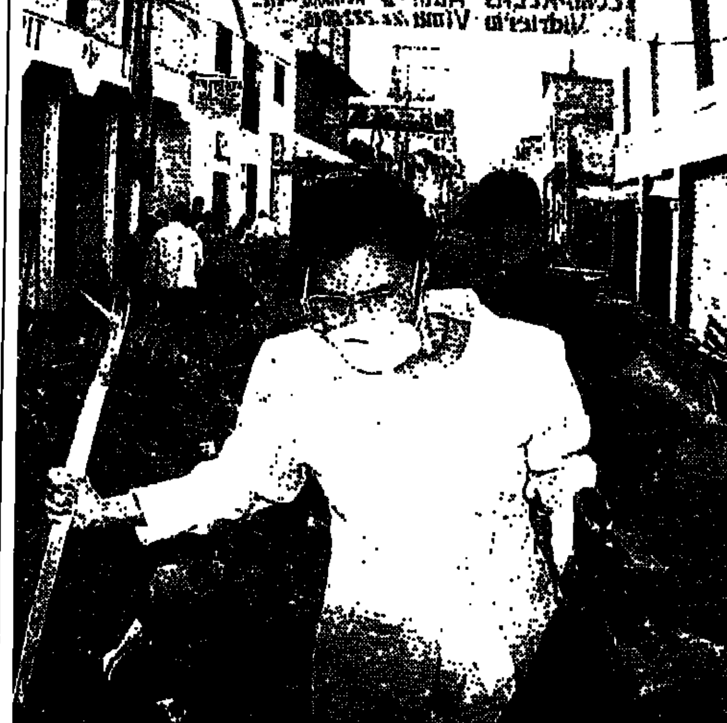
As the Israeli parliament began a two-day debate on the Wye accord, the prime minister added that he would reconvene his cabinet this week to review the suspension of the withdrawal. Last Sunday Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had agreed that Israel would pull back from 2 per cent of the West Bank by this weekend.

In spite of this latest delay, it is still likely that the Wye agreement will be implemented. The terms are assured the support of some 90 of 120 Knesset members, and Mr Netanyahu's speech was aimed chiefly at hardliners who have threatened to topple his coalition.

On Monday Jewish settlers from Kedumim, 8km west of the mainly Arab city of Nablus in the West Bank, tried to set up two trailers on a hilltop.

Kedumim's mayoress, Daniela Weiss, said that the group had been encouraged by Mr Sharon: "We understood that the attitude of the Israeli government is that he who holds the land determines policy and we are acting accordingly."

The settlers were later removed by Israeli police, but said they would return.



Honduran women struggle through the streets of Comayaguela as they begin to rebuild their shattered lives PHOTOGRAPH: JORGE MAJIN

Calls rise for debt relief

Charlotte Denny

CUBA last week became the latest country to write off its loans to the Central American countries ravaged by Hurricane Mitch.

Havana's announcement that it is cancelling repayments on a loan worth $50 million followed earlier moves by France and Spain to write off their loans to the region. The World Bank also announced that it was making up to £200 million available and Britain has promised $16 million in aid.

Hurricane Mitch killed an estimated 10,000 people, left hundreds of thousands homeless and destroyed economic infrastructure. Worst hit were Honduras and Nicaragua which appealed for foreign debt relief at a summit of Central American presidents last week.

Aid groups urged Britain to reverse its opposition to unilateral debt cancellation. Britain wants a co-ordinated approach to debt relief for the region by the West. The UK also favours setting up a trust fund to meet short-term debt service obligations.

The UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, announced that they had written to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund calling for a moratorium on debt service payments.

France has written off loans worth $30 million. The Spanish government will give up about $64 million by waiving payments due before 2002.

Honduras owes Britain $2.2 million out of its total foreign debt of $4.4 billion, while Nicaragua owes $1.3 million from its $5.8 billion.

Oxfam and other aid groups want a meeting of all creditors and the international financial institutions to discuss speeding multilateral debt relief. Neither Honduras nor Nicaragua can qualify for reduction in their loans until they have spent three years on an IMF programme of economic reform.

Oxfam's policy adviser, Tony Burden, said bilateral debts should be written off and and multilateral debt reduced to levels that release enough money for recovery.

Nicaragua, he said, "allocates half of government revenue to debt servicing, and Honduras a third of revenue. Oxfam suggests this should be reduced to a limit of 5 per cent of revenue for both countries."

Britain's Treasury is opposed to unilateral debt write-offs, arguing that rich lender countries benefit, rather than the debtor. Under World Bank rules, creditors agree to reduce their loans in proportion to how much of the total debt stock is owed to them. Because most rescheduling agreements reduce the overall loans burden rather than writing it off, if one country cancels all debt, it simply reduces the amount other creditors have to pay.

Comment, page 12

Zimbabwe troops desert war

OPPOSITION to Zimbabwe's role in the Congo war has led to soldiers deserting the army, *writes Andrew Meldrum in Harare*.

More than 50 troops, including some officers, have refused to go to Congo. They have been arrested. Several are suing the government, arguing that involvement in the war is unconstitutional and therefore invalidates their contracts of service.

The army is reportedly trying to encourage officers by offering them the equivalent of $300 a day for duty in Congo. There are estimated to be 11,000 Zimbabwean troops in Congo, helping President Laurent Kabila repulse rebel fighters sponsored by Rwanda and Uganda.

● Soldiers opened fire on rioters in eastern Zimbabwe last week, killing one person, during an anti-government strike. Shops and businesses all over the country were closed after workers heeded calls from the Congress of Trade Unions to stay at home in protest against economic mismanagement and soaring inflation.

The Week

PRESIDENT Clinton agreed to pay $850,000 to Paula Jones, to end her sexual harassment case against him.

Washington Diary, page 6

A MUNICH boy, born and raised in Germany by Turkish parents, was taken from them and deported to Turkey by Germany's supreme court. The boy has a criminal record of more than 60 offences.

THE urban backlash against the US gun lobby gained dramatic momentum when the city of Chicago sued 22 firearms manufacturers and distributors for saturating local markets with weapons in the knowledge that they would fall into the hands of criminals.

BRAZIL signed up to a tough austerity programme in exchange for a rescue package worth $41.5 billion from the International Monetary Fund.

Washington Post, page 13

THE European Union's financial auditors have refused to approve its [illegible] because of irregularities and missing money amounting to more than 5 per cent of the EU's $105 billion budget.

ON THE last day of the Climate Change Convention at Buenos Aires, President Clinton signed the Kyoto protocol which will legally bind the developed world to reducing greenhouse gases.

COLOMBIA'S air force commander, General José Manuel Sandoval, resigned after an airforce cargo plane carrying 740kg of cocaine was seized by US Customs after it landed at Fort Lauderdale airport.

BERMUDA'S Progressive Labour party swept to victory in the island's general election, ending the Conservatives' 30-year rule.

KENNETH NOYE, the main suspect in a road rage murder, opted to fight extradition to Britain and remain on remand in a Spanish prison.

HUMAN trials are to begin next year of a technique that could lead to development of a vaccine against the virus that causes Aids, after it boosted the levels of immune system T-cells in monkeys.

SIX people went on trial in Paris, accused of running a global call-girl ring whose clients allegedly included film stars, politicians, arms dealers, Gulf state princes and millionaire businessmen.

THE RUSSIAN ballerina Svetlana Beriosova has died at the age of 66.

Food alarm in Russia as winter bites

James Meek in Moscow

ISOLATED regions of Russia could run out of food this winter, a United Nations agency warned last week as efforts to push surplus Western farm produce Moscow's way gathered pace.

The Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organisation said vast areas of the far north and northeast, which are partly cut off from the rest of the country as seas and rivers freeze, faced a risk of "erratic food supplies".

It linked the crisis to the country's disastrous harvest, which has been known of for months. Most Russia-based experts, however, argue that the country is not short of food, but simply lacks cash in circulation, and a banking system capable of buying and moving food to where it is needed.

This summer was one of the harshest the grain belt has known. In wheat fields from the northern Caucasus to central Siberia, farmers watched in despair as crops shrivelled in the heat.

But Andrei Sizov, an analyst with the Russian agricultural consultancy Sovecon, said that despite the appalling harvest, Russian farmers had exported a record 190,000 tonnes of grain in September. The real problem, he said, was the banking crisis, which froze the accounts of big Russian grain buyers just when they were about to conclude deals with the farmers.

The government is accepting more than 3 million tonnes of emergency food aid from the United States, and is considering an offer of almost 2 million tonnes of grain and meat from the European Union, not because Russia is desperately short of home-grown food, but because the government is short of cash — and food, rather than money, is all the West is prepared to give.

The International Monetary Fund suspended payouts of a long-term $22.6 billion loan after the August 17 financial collapse in Russia.

"Obviously we can't give money; we're giving food," said Bertrand Soret, spokesman for the European Commission office in Moscow. "We want to retain some kind of control over the use of this assistance, and if you give money it's harder to control."

Mr Sizov said the food priorities for the government were not so much the population at large as its two most miserable institutions — its conscript defence force and the over-crowded prison system, which were both utterly dependent on Moscow for food. Russia's prisons have a population in excess of a million people.

"It's necessary to feed the army and the prisons. That's the reality. That's where the bread will go," he said.

But other social groups are desperately short of money to buy food and do not always have the means to grow their own, such as the elderly, the disabled, single parents and families with many children.

Caroline Hurford, the International Committee of the Red Cross's spokeswoman in Moscow, said the much-vaunted economic stabilisation of late 1997 and early 1998 had done nothing to prevent millions of people sliding deeper into poverty.

The ICRC confirmed that the problem was lack of money. "Assessments showed we could buy food parcels locally," Ms Hurford said. "The Red Cross is buying all its food parcels in Russia."

Le Monde, page 18

Campaign for peace grows in Sri Lanka

Susannah Price in Colombo

ASOKA DAYARATNE, a war hero who lost his arm while pursuing a group of Tamil Tiger separatists, is the latest of a growing number of Sri Lankans calling for an end to the 15-year-old conflict.

"We want to protect the lives of the children of poor people who go to war," he says. "With all my experience I now know this is a war that cannot be won. We are wasting lives."

The growing opposition to the war was inspired by a bloodbath at [illegible] than 1,000 soldiers died when rebels fighting for a Tamil homeland seized the northern town of Kilinochchi in a three-day battle.

"There is a new movement for peace, and it's timely," said Kumari Jayawardene of the Women's Coalition, which has brought together groups from all over the country to call for peace talks. "The débâcle at Kilinochchi really made people stop and think again."

Leading members of business, employers' and trade associations issued a declaration calling on all political parties to adopt a common policy on peace.

"We realised that until we solve the ethnic problem we can't have economic freedom, no roads, no infrastructure; everything gets blown up or destroyed," said the co-ordinating chairman, Lalith Kotelawala, who was injured in a bomb explosion in Colombo in 1996.

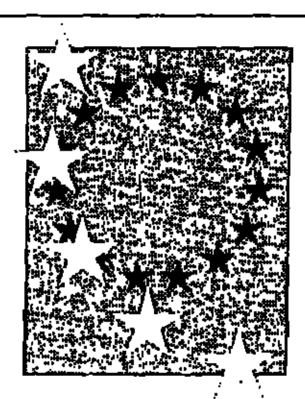
But one of the biggest obstacles to peace is the lack of agreement between the two main political groups — the governing People's Alliance and the opposition United National Party. The government has been unable to implement its plans for limited devolution because it lacks opposition support.

"How can you ever expect the military and Tigers to come together if you can't get the two political parties to talk," said one exasperated businessman.

There have been street demonstrations for peace, and one group of women blocked the centre of Colombo during rush hour.

"I am always confident that mass pressure does work, because Sri Lanka is a democracy and we do have elections and an opposition," Ms Jayawardene said as she called on politicians to "put aside petty conflicts and start reflecting the mood of the people, which is for peace".

Thatcher's vision becoming reality



Europe this week

Martin Walker

NO WONDER they broke out the champagne. On the face of it, the formal negotiations for enlarging the European Union opened very smoothly last week. Six countries came in for the first accession talks at ministerial level on seven chapters of the "acquis", the vast 80,000-page body of EU rules and regulations.

All six countries were told that three of these chapters had been provisionally completed; research, education and rules for small- and medium-sized business enterprises. Ministers then agreed that there did not seem to be serious difficulties with the other four areas: telecommunications, culture and audio-visual policies, industrial policy, and the move to a common foreign and security policy.

So far, so good. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus (not forgetting that little local difficulty with the Turks) are all on their way into the club, just as Margaret Thatcher foretold in her Bruges speech in the year before the Berlin Wall came crashing down.

But do not be fooled. They have simply completed the easy parts of the process. The real troubles lie in wait, from agricultural policy to border security, from environmental and financial standards to budgets and the introduction of value-added tax. And those are merely the difficulties that face the applicant countries. The really insuperable problems of enlargement are those that now confront the current 15 members of the EU as they address the costs and reforms required in admitting the CEECS, the fashionable acronym for the Central and Eastern European Countries.

Now that the single currency is almost launched, the enlargement of the EU into central and eastern Europe is the grand challenge that will dominate European affairs for the next 20 years. It will change both its security priorities and its character, making EU citizens on average considerably poorer.

The average citizen of the EU today has a per capita share of gross domestic product of just over $20,000 a year. By contrast, the 39 million Poles have a per capita GDP of barely a third of that amount, and the 18 million Czechs and Hungarians have less than half. And these are the advanced new candidates, far richer than the hapless Romanians and Bulgarians in the second wave, who are less than half as well off again as the Czechs.

The bottom line is that the first wave of enlargement will increase the population of the EU by 17 per cent but will add only 3 per cent to the club's GDP. Even if Poland can maintain the breakneck pace of economic growth it has managed for the past three years, it will still take at least 15 years before its GDP is within striking distance of the EU average.

The admission of the poor Easterners will have a dramatic impact on the way Europe finances its budget and on the way it pays out its structural funds, which are designed to even out regional inequalities. And it will force a fundamental overhaul of the controversial common agricultural policy (CAP): the Poles alone have as many farmers as Britain, France and Germany combined.

Before enlargement becomes practicable, the EU has to do three things. First, it must reform its agricultural policy, which still accounts for half of the EU's annual $90 billion budget. The Poles, Czechs and Hungarians have all said that they assume the current level of farm subsidies will be available to them once they join. Forget it. This would double the cost of the CAP overnight. And it would be incompatible with the next phase of world trade talks, where Europe is already committed in principle to phase out subsidies for food exports.

Second, the EU has to sort out its own budget payment and transfer system. Currently, Germany contributes close to 30 per cent of the EU budget, but gets back only 15 per cent of the refunds that come through the CAP and structural funds. Net contributors to the budget, such as Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands and Britain, are in effect subsidising Spain, Greece and Portugal. Spain, the biggest and toughest of these poorer countries, says it will block reform rather than forgo its income from the EU, which is worth more than $10 billion a year. Germany has said it is no longer willing to act as Europe's bankroller. And Britain has said it will not give up the annual $3 billion budget rebate Mrs Thatcher won 15 years ago.

Third, the EU has to work out how to adapt an institutional system designed for six countries to a much bigger administrative operation embracing more than 20 nations. There [illegible] Commissioners in Brussels, one for each country and two for the bigger ones, which most insiders reckon is already too many.

If the current rules stand, the next wave of members will usher in seven more commissioners, because Poland reckons it is big enough to warrant two representatives. Then there will have to be new jobs found inside the Commission for Poles, Czechs and Slovenes, and a re-weighting of the various national votes inside the Council of Ministers. Can a body of more than 20 countries make progress with a system of national vetoes which Greece has used to stall EU policy towards Turkey, or is it finally time to move towards majority voting? This was the issue that so nearly sank the Amsterdam treaty negotiations that they decided the decision could wait until some future date.

That future is now upon us. In the course of the next seven months, by the end of the German presidency, these three big issues are supposed to be resolved. That is why there will be four EU summits of heads of government in that period.

The prospects are grim. The CAP reform is already faltering. Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, has presented his reform proposal. It is based on the principle that the EU will no longer subsidise food prices, but will allow them to adjust to world levels. He proposes subsidising individual farmers in poor areas as a way of maintaining the charms of the rural landscape. Britain would love this, even though we all know the devil is in the detail. The farming lobby hates it, along with all the countries and regions that currently do well from the CAP — France, Denmark, Spain, Greece and Bavaria.

The battle over the budget will be dreadful, since Spain, Greece and Portugal simply refuse to accept that they will no longer be "poor" countries once enlargement begins. And the Germans refuse to accept the historical lesson that the EU functions only because they have consistently been prepared to underwrite it.

The rows over institutional reform have already proved too hard. There are no new ideas on the table. It looks as though the curse of Mrs Thatcher is finally about to be visited on Europe. She always hoped that enlarging the EU would preclude its deepening into a federal system, just as she knew that her budget rebate was storing up trouble for the future, and that CAP reform would wreck the central focus of the EU as we have known it. As we embark on this grand historic venture of enlargement, we shall hear her shrill tones cackling in the months and years to come.

Bringing in the poor neighbours



Country, GDP [illegible]

Country	GDP per person (£)	% of EU average
Member states		
1 Luxembourg	[illegible]	[illegible]
2 Denmark	26,700	115
3 Belgium	26,200	113
4 Austria	26,000	112
5 Germany	25,500	110
6 Netherlands	24,200	105
7 France	24,200	104
8 Italy	23,400	101
9 [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
10 Finland	[illegible]	[illegible]
11 Sweden	[illegible]	[illegible]
12 Ireland	22,300	95
13 Spain	18,100	[illegible]
14 Portugal	16,400	71
15 Greece	16,100	69
Applicants		
16 Slovenia	15,900	68
17 Czech Rep	14,600	63
18 Hungary	11,000	47
19 Slovakia	11,000	47
20 Poland	9,100	40
21 Estonia	8,600	37
22 Romania	7,100	31
23 Lithuania	7,100	30
24 Latvia	6,300	27
25 Bulgaria	5,600	23

Paula Jones case finally consigned to history

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

SPECULATION that Bill Clinton would settle the Paula Jones case had risen and fallen according to a very familiar cycle in recent months. Almost as familiar and predictable a cycle, indeed, as the speculation that the United States was about to bomb Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

But in both cases Washington had grown used to the expectation being belied by the result. Troops moved regularly to the Gulf in response to the latest round of cat-and-mouse from Baghdad, and then a few weeks later returned just as regularly, without striking against Iraq. In just the same way, no matter how often the lawyers went into their huddles, the indestructible Jones case seemed doomed to survive their efforts.

So the news last week that Clinton had actually settled with the former Arkansas state clerk came as something of a shock to Washington's collective mental routine. The Jones case *over*? Surely not. They had always thought it would last for ever. How come he did something so obvious or so sensible after all this time?

The fundamental point that needs to be made about the Jones case is that, at least from Clinton's point of view, it should have been settled long ago, and certainly last year. If Clinton's and Jones's lawyers could have agreed the deal that was on the table 18 months ago, the history of the subsequent months would have been very different indeed.

That they failed to do so was partly the fault of the lawyers, but the prime responsibility must surely lie with Clinton himself for refusing to agree some form of apology as part of the cash settlement of $700,000 that the two sides had provisionally settled on. But then, as now, Clinton continued to deny Jones's allegations, and an apology also seemed to be a political risk that Clinton felt he could not afford to take.

The risk factor was real. To have struck a deal with an apology attached would certainly have been a personal and political humiliation, and it might easily have stirred up a flurry of other sexual allegations about the president — as Clinton, of course, knew rather better than most.

But those considerations could have been weighed and rejected then as they have been now. While it is obviously easiest to be wise after the event, the risks, though real, still seemed less threatening than the dangers — since confirmed — of continued denial. Everything that has gone so badly for Clinton this year derives from the failure to settle the Jones case, as well as from the determination to deny not only Jones's allegations but also the allegations about other women, including Monica Lewinsky, that were dredged up as the sexual harassment case proceeded.

Clinton was so determined to fight the Jones case to the bitter end that — even after it was dismissed by Judge Susan Webber Wright in April — he speculated that it might be helpful and not harmful to his cause if the appeals court were to reinstate the suit some time this winter.

Clinton believed that public opinion was so much on his side against Jones that the resumption of the sexual harassment case would create an atmosphere of sympathy which would wash over into the impeachment debate. Believe it or not, Clinton even intended to give evidence from the witness box in the Jones case, whenever it came to court.

At some point this summer or autumn, however, Clinton clearly changed his mind. The watershed, one assumes, must have been some time after August 17, when Clinton gave evidence to Kenneth Starr's grand jury on the Lewinsky investigation and admitted, for the first time, to his celebrated "inappropriate" relationship.

The talk of settlement began in earnest in September, and was finally agreed last weekend. In the event, Clinton has now agreed to pay out $150,000 more than he could have paid last year, a settlement of $850,000. It would have been cheaper in every way 18 months ago. But even so, the deal was worth every cent.

Clinton's stubborn refusal to settle the Jones case was a colossal error that practically cost him his office, and it has massively damaged his reputation in ways that will haunt him to the grave. And yet the most significant thing about his handling of the affair is that, in the end, after all the embarrassments and humiliations it brought down on him, Clinton actually did the right thing.

Immediately after the November 3 mid-term elections, there was a flurry of speculation that Clinton felt personally vindicated by the results. He now believed, it was claimed, that he no longer needed to reach a settlement in the Jones case. He was alleged to be no longer certain that he needed to strike a plea bargain with Congress over Lewinsky, accepting a censure as the price of the lifting of the impeachment threat. That speculation always felt more like disinformation than informed comment. The settlement of the Jones case confirms it in part. The search for the appropriate end game on impeachment continues but there will be a settlement here too, perhaps by Christmas.

Clinton has taken to telling friends that he has 700 days to rescue his presidency for history. As Jimmy Carter might have said, he intends to be the best lame duck president in American history. If this is so, it seems safe to assume that the administration would very much like to bomb Iraq.

Money troubles breed China protests

John Gittings in Hong Kong

NEARLY 200 victims of a financial swindle marched through Beijing last week — a form of grassroots protest becoming increasingly common in China.

The investors, who lost money in the Beijing-based Xinguo Da Futures company, were outraged at a report that appeared to exonerate the government from responsibility.

China's Xinhua news agency blamed the fraud on three "swindlers" led by a Taiwanese who bought a futures company in January and then set up a fake trading exchange in eastern China, offering high interest rates to gullible clients.

The Chinese authorities — as the agency reported — have been at pains recently to show they are cracking down on financial crime. But the protesters, who are demanding government compensation, say that the company's original owners had state backing, and that its dealings should have been monitored.

The sight of angry "common people" protesting is now familiar in Beijing. In recent days, laid-off workers have marched, sacked staff of the Nationalities Hotel have staged a sit-down protest, and families evicted to make way for development have shouted outside City Hall.

Beijing citizens have a tradition of independence — most strikingly displayed in 1989 when they blocked the roads to support students in Tiananmen Square demonstrating for liberalisation. But protests by jobless workers are now common in many Chinese towns as failing state industries shed labour and cut wages.

Rural discontent is even more widespread. One recent report attributed to top officials said that there were more than 10,000 cases of "unruly incidents" by angry peasants last year. The most common complaints are high taxes, delays in state payment for crops, and inadequate compensation for land taken for highways and development.

On October 26, peasants from outside Guiyang, provincial capital of Guizhou, marched into the city to complain about land taken to build a new county town. They carried banners proclaiming, "We want democracy, We want justice".

Earlier this month a senior member of the National People's Congress — Cao Zhi, the standing committee vice-chairman — warned that unemployment was creating a new crime wave: "In the long run, only by developing the economy can enough jobs be provided to absorb laid-off urban workers or surplus rural labour," he said.

John Pomfret in Guangzhou adds: A court last week sentenced to death a Hong Kong gangster and four of his cohorts for a string of cross-border crimes. The case has touched off a debate over the integrity of Hong Kong's legal system following its return to Chinese rule last year.

The Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court pronounced Cheung Tze-keung and 35 of his followers guilty of a list of felonies spanning seven years.

According to court testimony, Cheung's band extorted more than $200 million in kidnapping fees from Hong Kong tycoons, and robbed jewellery stores of gold worth nearly $1 million.

Critics said that allowing China to try Cheung and his gang set a bad precedent because it would send a signal to communist authorities that they could prosecute people in China for crimes committed in Hong Kong.

Black power leader dies at 57

Martin Kettle in Washington

KWAME Ture, who in his days as sixties' militant Stokely Carmichael sent a shiver through white America and triggered an historic pulse of pride through a generation of black Americans, has died from prostate cancer at his home in the west African country of Guinea.

Ture, who was 57, took his name from the African leaders Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea. He was credited with originating the "black power" cry of the American black militant movement, which he was widely seen as personifying but within which he was often a solitary voice.

Jesse Jackson said he visited Ture at his home in Guinea during a trip to Africa last week. "He wanted his last days to be in Guinea and in west Africa. He wanted to be among the people of Africa. He was determined to give his life to transforming America and Africa," Mr Jackson added.

"He was committed to ending racial apartheid in our country. He helped to bring those walls down."

In June 1966, three weeks before his 25th birthday, Ture raised the cry of "black power" as he led a freedom march in Mississippi. He later wrote that by black power he meant political and economic empowerment. "We want control of the institutions of the communities where we live and we want to stop the exploitation of non-white people around the world," he wrote.

The tall, sparely built Carmichael was an iconic militant of his era, and in 1968 was appointed prime minister of the Black Panthers.

Carmichael was always far more conscious of Africa than many of his black power peers. "We are an African people with an African ideology," he said in 1968.

For the rest of his life, he continued preaching black power and championing socialism while condemning America, capitalism and Zionism.

From Guinea, he declared himself a Pan Africanist, hoping to see a single, socialist state for all of Africa.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Blair and Ashdown alarm troops by linking forces

THE PRIME Minister and the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown, claimed to be taking "a step away from destructive political tribalism" when they announced an ambitious scheme to extend cross-party co-operation. But they went out of their way to deny instant claims that their initiative — which caught all but a select handful of MPs and ministers by surprise — was a prelude to a merger, coalition, or even the long-rumoured Cabinet seat for Mr Ashdown.

The two parties, which have been co-operating on constitutional reform, will now extend that to include health, education, the welfare state and European integration.

Tony Blair, who is not persuaded of the merits of proportional representation, has agreed to hold a referendum on the subject, but that is now likely to be delayed until after the next general election. Lib-Dem toilers in the constituencies want no more cosying up to New Labour. Neither, for that matter, do many Labour activists, particularly of the "old Labour" tendency.

Some Labour MPs, resentful that Mr Ashdown gets better access to the Prime Minister than they do, could not understand what Mr Blair was up to. "Why should we want to be nice to the Liberal Democrats?" asked Hackney MP Brian Sedgemore. "They're pretty bloody-minded and pretty bloody useless."

This could well be Mr Ashdown's last year as party leader, and some of his grassroots members suspect he is thinking more of his own future in politics than his party's distinctive identity. He could face a divisive special conference in the new year if he fails to persuade his party's executive that he has not "sold out" to Mr Blair.

Comment, page 12

BARNSLEY, in South Yorkshire, became the first town to have National Lottery cash earmarked for it under a pilot scheme to try to improve the generally poor take-up of lottery grants by the former coalfield communities. They have received an average of under £70 a head in grants since the lottery started, compared with a national average of about £90. Barnsley has received only £39 a head.

There will now be an investigation into the poor performance of the coalfield communities. Janet Paraskeva, England director of the charities board, thought part of the problem was that "in areas like these there is no history of success and no role models to follow". Barnsley will be encouraged to draw up more plans that could qualify for lottery funding.

Meanwhile Marjorie Longdin, the 73-year-old aunt of the Tory leader, William Hague, celebrated a lottery win of £856,648. She would not say whether her nephew or his party might share in her good fortune. Speaking as a member of a "good Yorkshire family", Mr Hague thought it unlikely.

THE ACTRESS Emma Thompson demolished the notion that she might become one of the female high-flyers recruited by Baroness Jay's Women's Unit to serve as role models for teenage girls. It had been reported that she and the former Spice Girl, Geri Halliwell, might sign up for the job, though neither had actually been asked.

Ms Thompson, who admitted that her role models had been Mick Jagger and Marlon Brando, said she was "rather pissed off" with the nannyist Minister for Women. Her immediate response had been "an overwhelming desire to go out and score a load of cocaine in rebellion".

UP TO one in five male magistrates are freemasons, according to a survey of the judiciary carried out by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg.

However, it is not going to be easy to secure the greater openness in the judiciary which the Commons Home Affairs Committee is pressing for. Out of 26,000 questionnaires sent to magistrates, only 15,926 (61 per cent) were returned. Of these, 5.4 per cent refused to disclose whether they were masons.

Judges — full- and part-time — did rather better. Of the 5,290 circulated, 5,033 returned their questionnaires. Of that number 247 (4.9 per cent) said they were masons and only 64 refused to answer.

The United Grand Lodge had refused to supply names of judges who are freemasons and Lord Millett, a law lord who is the most senior freemason in the judiciary, branded compulsory disclosure as an "invasion of privacy".

The survey, however incomplete, supports the long-held belief that masonic membership is higher in the judiciary than among the public, where it represents under 2 per cent of the adult male population.

IN AN attempt to make budget savings of £20 million, Greater Manchester Police want to close all eight police stations in Manchester's twin city, Salford, and replace them with "local interaction points" that resemble hole-in-the-wall bank cashpoints. Access to manned stations will be at the push of a button, and there might eventually be video links.

A spokesman said most people who wanted to talk to the police already did so by phone. The scheme could be part of a larger "rationalisation" programme to keep more officers on "front-line service" instead of manning police stations.



The Prince of Wales shares a joke with the Queen at one of his 50th birthday parties PHOTO: RONAHL

'How ever did you put up with me, Mummy?'

THE Prince of Wales abandoned customary royal protocol last week when he publicly addressed the Queen as "Mummy" and said he did not know how either of his parents had managed to put up with him since 1948, *writes Amelia Gentleman*.

Prince Charles was clearly enjoying the party which the Queen had organised for him at Buckingham Palace on the eve of his 50th birthday.

It was a party with a difference: the strains of rock music were heard alongside the classical; jugglers mingled with charity workers; a military band played alongside the Welsh National Opera; and a bevy of celebrities rubbed shoulders with royalty.

The prince had enjoyed a different style of birthday celebrations earlier in the day. Touring Sheffield's Manor estate the prince said that seeing successful projects to employ young people and wean others off drugs were "the best birthday present I can have".

He was followed by modest crowds singing Happy Birthday and earned loud cheers when a 78-year-old widow, Elaine Glaze, gave him cufflinks and a carnation and asked: "Can I kiss you?" He replied: "Absolutely."

The prince's companion, Camilla Parker Bowles, was not among the Queen's guests, but she hosted a more intimate gathering last Saturday at Highgrove, his Gloucestershire home.

Parents to sue council over child sex abuse at nursery

Peter Hetherington

PARENTS of young children who suffered systematic sexual abuse at a nursery in Newcastle upon Tyne were last week planning to sue the city council for substantial damages after an independent report outlined a string of failures by the authority.

After a lengthy investigation, following the collapse of a child abuse trial involving two nursery nurses, a four-strong inquiry team said toddlers had been taken away from the nursery for short periods — and it hinted broadly that a paedophile ring was in operation.

The team said that as well as the two nurses at the centre of the affair, Christopher Lillie and Dawn Reed, it was clear that others outside the nursery were involved in abusing children "for their own gratification and probably also for production of pornographic materials".

They added: "These people have not been found."

With 64 children affected by abuse at the Shieldfield nursery, and 434 formal complaints made against the council's social services department, Clare Routledge, a lawyer representing 27 families, said her clients intended to pursue compensation claims for all the children affected and were preparing legal action against the council.

Mr Lillie and Ms Reed, who are believed still to be living in the Northeast, and still registered as nursery nurses, walked free from Newcastle crown court in 1994 when a judge ruled that video evidence from one child was inadmissible.

The NSPCC said the law had since been tightened, and now clearly stated that evidence from a child should be heard, regardless of age, if an "intelligible testimony" could be made. But it said improvements were still needed so that children could give evidence through an intermediary if necessary, and called for their inclusion in a forthcoming Criminal Justice Bill.

Northumbria police said they had no plans to launch another inquiry "unless further evidence becomes available".

The assaults were said to have taken place in toilets, in a cupboard and in a play house at the nursery. One boy said Lillie had held his penis and "rubbed it until hurt". Another child said a "hammer with water coming out of it was put into her 'jenny'", while a fourth said that "Dawn did most of the scary stuff".

According to the report, another child said: "They gave you to strangers." Sometimes these people — unnamed and presumably unknown — were referred to as "other mummies and daddies", and children described cameras, including video equipment, being used.

Sioux battle in Glasgow for sacred shirt

Gerard Seenan

SOME of the last survivors of the defeated and dwindling Sioux people arrived in Glasgow last weekend to seek the return of a warrior's "ghost" shirt.

For the Sioux of Lakota the shirt, which sits in a glass cage in the city's Kelvingrove museum, is the symbol of a once proud nation — they believe it was taken from a slain warrior at the Battle of Wounded Knee in which the tribe was almost wiped out.

On December 29, 1890 hundreds of Sioux camped at Wounded Knee creek in South Dakota. Starving and on the point of defeat at the hands of the settlers who stole their lands and buffalo, they decided to surrender. As they handed over their weapons to the 7th Cavalry, a shot rang out. No one knows quite from where, but the cavalry responded instantly, killing more than 300 people.

The shirt is believed to have been taken from a body by a souvenir hunter and found its way to Glasgow on Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Mark O'Neill, the head of curatorial services at Glasgow Museums, says it could open the floodgates for repatriation requests being made at museums all over Britain. But this argument has not swayed the Glasgow public: 95 per cent think it should return home. This week the council will make its decision.

Stricken farmers get lifeline

James Meikle

THE Government this week threw hard hit farmers a £120 million lifeline but warned their future could be secured only by a shake-up in European agriculture.

The Agriculture Minister, Nick Brown, unveiled an emergency aid package that will provide further subsidies for livestock farmers, particularly in the hills, and the extra use of EU funds to balance currency fluctuations.

He made clear that the cash, half from the European Union, was meant to help farmers "through exceptionally difficult times", which have seen the industry sink to its worst depression since the 1930s.

Farmers' leaders welcomed the deal as a safety net for some "teetering on the brink of financial collapse" while conservationists warned it was "little more than a sticking plaster over a long-term problem".

Mr Brown accepted that farmers had suffered from a marked deterioration in business as well as poor weather, which had delayed the sale of their animals to an already overcrowded market.

The export ban on beef imposed by the EU in 1996 because of the BSE crisis had been followed by the collapse of export markets for sheep and pigs because of the strong pound and financial crises in Russia and the Far East.

The package comes on top of other aid, worth £150 million, provided in recent months.

Farmers get about £2.3 billion a year through EU Common Agriculture Policy arrangements. Help with anti-BSE measures accounted for another £1.3 billion help over the past two years.

Government figures reveal average farm incomes dipped by nearly 40 per cent from £24,600 in 1996/97 to £15,000 in 1997/98. This financial year's figures are expected to be much worse.

A group representing hill farmers across the north of England says the £8,400 average income for cattle and beef farms in the hills could drop well below £4,000 before the effects of the new help are felt.

Mr Brown hoped that EU ministers would next week pave the way for an end to the beef export ban imposed when the then Tory government admitted a possible link between "mad cow" disease and new variant CJD in humans.

The aid demonstrated the Government's commitment to rural communities, but conditions would remain tough and the longer term future depended on reform for more competitive and sustainable agriculture.

"It must reduce the burden imposed by the Common Agriculture Policy on consumers and taxpayers, and it must free resources for better targeted measures to support the rural economy and enhance the environment," Mr Brown said.

He also made it clear that ministers were keeping a close eye on the Office of Fair Trading's investigation into allegations that supermarkets have not passed on big cuts in farm gate prices to consumers.

The Opposition agriculture spokesman, Tim Yeo, welcomed the announcement. But he told Mr Brown in the Commons: "The downturn in farm incomes, like the downturn in the economy, was made in Downing Street. The level of the pound during the last 18 months has been a far more important cause of falling farm incomes than the weather."

Down but not out: a farmer at a cattle sale near York

Lords reserve judgment on Pinochet as 'too close to call'

Jamie Wilson

THE House of Lords last week reserved judgment on whether General Augusto Pinochet is immune from prosecution on charges of genocide, terrorism and torture.

A panel of five senior Law Lords said they would deliver their opinion "in due course" in the appeal by the Crown Prosecution Service, on behalf of Spanish authorities, against a High Court ruling on October 28 that the former Chilean dictator's arrest at a London clinic on October 16 was unlawful.

The three judges, led by the Lord Chief Justice Lord Bingham, ruled that as a former head of state the 82-year-old general enjoyed sovereign immunity and was immune from arrest.

Owen Davis, a barrister specialising in human rights cases, said he was "confident" the Law Lords would uphold the appeal.

"The highly complicated argument enabled the issues to crystalise and the . . . interveners have presented a comprehensive and cohesive rationale for overturning the decision of the High Court," he said.

However, many experts suggest the decision is too close to call. At least two of the Law Lords, the campaigning South African judges Lords Hoffman and Steyn, appeared to be coming down in favour of overturning the High Court decision. The Lords can rule with a majority decision, although in a case this sensitive they are likely to try to reach a unanimous decision.

Earlier the Law Lords heard that the general's immunity from arrest even covered his role in Operation Condor, the systematic attempt to suppress opposition throughout South America's southern cone using assassination and torture.

Clive Nicholls QC, for Pinochet, said the "co-ordination at an international level" required official involvement and so qualified for state immunity.

However, Christopher Greenwood, for the CPS, said that some of the acts alleged against Pinochet could not be considered legitimate functions of a head of state. "Torture, hostage-taking and crimes against humanity are conduct which international law has forbidden unequivocally throughout the period we are looking at," he said.

Pinochet is now on bail at a private psychiatric hospital in London, following his arrest on October 16 at the request of the Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón.

In Brief

AFTER 69 days of public hearings, the Stephen Lawrence inquiry has ended. The chairman, Sir William Macpherson, is expected to produce a report calling for the most radical shake-up in the policing of racial crime since Lord Scarman's inquiry into the race riots of 1981.

PETER YOUNG, a former fund manager for Morgan Grenfell, arrived at court dressed as a woman to face seven fraud-related charges in connection with the unit-trust scandal that cost Deutsche Bank £400 million. He has declared himself mentally and legally incompetent to defend the case.

THE Government announced extra cash for teaching of ethnic minority pupils, with help targeted at refugee and other children for whom English is not their first language.

PRISON officers were banned from launching a campaign of industrial action, in the first use of the courts by the present government against a trade union.

TWO oil sketches by John Constable have been stolen from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

BRITISH aid worker Sally Becker — known as the Angel of Mostar — was shot in the thigh by two masked men in Albania. Earlier the Home Secretary refused her permission to bring a 91-strong party of wounded Kosovo Albanian children and relatives to the UK because she had not provided evidence there was enough money to finance the group or pay for their eventual return.

A WOMAN prisoner and her newborn baby who were refused entry to Holloway's mother and baby unit have been told that a new admission board would reconsider the case. If successful, the daughter would not need to be taken into care.

COSMETIC testing on animals will no longer take place in Britain, the Government said.

BRITISH Steel warned of 1,800 further redundancies and an extended break over the Christmas holiday in an effort to avoid financial losses.

THE cost of crossing the Channel will soar by nearly a third when operators replace the income they will lose as duty-free shopping ends in June.

GERALD LONG, the former head of Reuters News Agency, has died at the age of 75.

RUMER Godden, the author of Black Narcissus and many other works, has died at the age of 90.

VALERIE Hobson, the actress who married John Profumo, has died at the age of 81.

Peers defied as Euro vote bill returns for the fourth time

THE Government refused to blink in its showdown with the House of Lords over the peers' third successive refusal to bow to the will of the Commons over voting methods for the European parliament elections, *writes Michael White.*

The bill is to be amended again — for the fourth time — and sent back to the Lords. It may include a further concession on the terms of the promised review into the "closed party list" which will require voters to back a party rather than a candidate.

William Hague, leader of the Conservative party, and his Lords leader, Lord Cranborne, argue that they represent public opinion against Labour's "control freak" tendency.

But Downing Street remains adamant that it will not let the hereditary peers — whose votes clinched last week's 237 to 194 majority — dictate to them on a manifesto issue.

They would prefer to risk trying to push the bill through in the new session, using guillotine procedures. If the Tories fillibuster, it will not work.

Failing that tactic, they will let the European elections take place under the normal first-past-the-post voting system.

Privately, Liberal Democrats, who are backing Labour to show solidarity over constitutional reform, agree that the cross-bench majority has a good case against "closed lists", which give party bosses too much power.



Rumble of revolt from Death Row

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

IT WAS, I suppose, a historic occasion. For a century now, the powers of the House of Lords have been steadily dribbling away.

Last week, on the eve of the greatest reform since 1911, they started a process that could destroy a Commons bill. Like transportation for stealing a sheep, this is not supposed to happen now.

Opponents of the death penalty argue that someone who already faces hanging will be more willing to kill again before he is caught. The Lords seem determined to prove them right.

The place was packed. Frail, white-haired peers rubbed shoulders with television presenters, advertising men and all the other riff-raff who have arrived in recent years. They crammed themselves against the benches, sat round the steps of the throne, and perched on the giant red pouffes in the middle.

One of these days, the hereditary peerage will be told to choose its last meal (mulligatawny, steak and kidney pud, scotch woodcock). Then it will be taken briskly to the scaffold where the silken rope awaits. In the meantime it lives on in the world's most luxurious Death Row.

Their lordships have started getting frisky. In the past, if two peers stood up at the same time, they would go into an elaborate "after you, Claude" act which often led both of them to sit down again. Now both remain standing, and the assembled ranks murmur, increasingly loud, the name of the one they want to hear. This is the equivalent of MCC members at Lord's throwing beer cans on the pitch.

There was even some booing when the Leader of the House, Margaret Jay, tried to insist on one Labour peer speaking instead of another. This is the equivalent of the members setting fire to the Long Room.

Their topic was the European Elections Bill, and in particular the Government's insistence on a "closed list" system of proportional representation. Under this method, voters are entitled to choose their favourite party. The actual candidates, however, will be selected — and ranked in order — by party apparatchiks, who will, the Lords assume, go for cowed, safe folk who will do as they're told by party HQ.

A few peers said that, however much they might dislike the closed list and its connotations, the Commons had voted for it three times, and by large majorities. In theory at least, it represented the will of the people.

In practice, it represents the will of the control freaks who run the modern Labour party. No wonder it had a majority of 182 when it last came to the Commons: zombies will always vote for more zombies.

In the Lords, almost nobody could be found to support the closed list. The Tory spokesman, Lord Mackay, gave a dry, witty speech in which he sarcastically welcomed the Government's one concession: a review of the system.

"Mr Dale Campbell-Savours said that this will be welcomed by people across the country. Your lordships may have noticed the bonfires lit across the country last week."

He quoted the Mirror, which had described supporters of the closed list as "craven Blairite numpties", technical language rarely heard in the Lords.

Lord Shore, a former Labour cabinet minister, made a ringing denunciation of the closed list. "This is not a matter of Lords versus Commons. It is accountability to the voters against accountability to a party committee. It is the electorate against the selectorate!"

A faint gurgling rumble, a murmur like the start of a distant avalanche, could just be discerned. It was the sound of their lordships cheering.

The Earl of Onslow was mortified at being told he must be wrong because he was a hereditary peer. "I'm not a half-wit because I'm a hereditary peer. I may be a half-wit, but it's not because I'm a hereditary peer."

Two hours later they slung the closed list out for the third time. They're barricaded in the old shack now, shouting: "If you want to see your bill again, you'll have to come and get me, Blair!"

Labour gag on NEC members

Michael White

LABOUR is preparing to crack the disciplinary whip over potential rebels on the party's new-look national executive committee with a code of conduct designed to stifle policy clashes in the media.

In advance of this week's first session of the expanded NEC, the party's incoming general secretary, Margaret McDonagh, sought to bind committee members to unprecedented rules that would require them to inform the party's press office "before discussing NEC business with the media".

Though her draft code of conduct explicitly states it "will not be used to suppress or silence debate on the NEC", it is bound to be seen as a warning to the four new leftwing constituency members.

Tony Blair is already embroiled in fresh allegations that staff at Downing Street are demonstrating "control freak" instincts over candidate selection in Wales, Scotland and the looming contest for London's mayor.

Ms McDonagh's text calls on NEC members to avoid discussing staff issues, finance, membership or election planning outside the forum. They should also "agree to inform the party press office, and to seek their advice, when appropriate, before discussing NEC business with the media".

The document also calls on colleagues not only to respect confidential discussions but also to "do nothing which will aid our political opponents and to avoid undermining public confidence in the integrity and honesty of party staff, other NEC members and Labour party members in general". In return, Labour's famously disciplined press office will respond to their requests for advice within 30 minutes offering it "freely and without prejudice" — while taking care to promote what Ms McDonagh calls "the views of the NEC as a whole".

That almost certainly means that the overwhelmingly Blairite view prevails on the NEC. But the 3?-strong committee contains trade union officials and other members — including at least 10 new ones this year — with independent opinions, which may make up for the disappearance of Old Labour stalwarts such as Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott. They were victims of new rules to broaden the NEC to include councillors and other non-MPs.

Livingstone suffers mayoral setback

Michael White

LABOUR'S candidate to be elected Mayor of London may not be picked until the party conference next October — just six months ahead of polling day — it emerged last week, as Ken Livingstone's campaign suffered a serious setback over the rules of the contest.

The leftwing MP and former leader of the abolished Greater London Council is ranged against a host of party rivals, most of whom are more acceptable to the Labour leadership in London.

London Labour loyalists insist the Brent East MP is not the victim of a personal vendetta. But, by a hefty 24 votes to 4 last week, they endorsed "modern procedures" which will make his task harder. Mr Livingstone claimed: "They have ignored the mandate of their own membership. I hope no one's going to need hospitalisation. One was aware at the weekend of bone-crunching pressures being applied to people," he said.

As the 29-strong Greater London Labour Party board meeting at the Commons endorsed the plan, Mr Livingstone's supporters appealed to them to "stop damaging democracy" by thwarting the man who tops most popularity polls among London's Labour voters.

Mr Livingstone later warned Tony Blair that he will organise an American-style "write-in" campaign if the party hierarchy in the capital keeps his name off the shortlist.

The former GLC leader made it clear that he will not enter the main contest as an independent candidate. That move would split Labour's vote and lead to the expulsion of the Brent East MP — and his supporters — from the party.

But he marshalled a clutch of new opinion polls showing his dominant position among would-be Labour hopefuls.

Loyalists are furious at Mr Livingstone using his genius for publicity to embarrass Mr Blair. But, with trouble brewing over central interference in the Welsh and Scottish devolution elections, some MPs are getting jittery that tough selection panels may also be used to weed out the awkward squad among MPs before the next election.

Lords favour cannabis use

Sarah Boseley

DOCTORS should be legally allowed to prescribe cannabis for multiple sclerosis sufferers and other patients who find it helps relieve pain, says a report from a scientific committee of the House of Lords.

The report was hailed as courageous by patients who smoke it in fear of the law. Its findings were backed by pharmacists but rejected by the British Medical Association, which represents doctors. The Government promptly let it be known that it would not lift the ban on a drug that has not undergone clinical trials.

The House of Lords select committee on Science and Technology accepted the lack of "rigorous scientific evidence" for the pain-relieving properties of cannabis. But, said the chairman, Lord Perry of Walton, the proposal was made "primarily for compassionate reasons".

As a Schedule 1 drug, cannabis is deemed to have no therapeutic value. The Lords want it moved to Schedule 2, which would mean pharmacists could supply it and doctors could prescribe it, although it would not be licensed, and they would have to do so on their own responsibility.

Mowlam combats Ulster deadlock

John Mullin

MO MOWLAM, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, last week took a desperate gamble to shore up the Good Friday agreement, announcing that she was recognising the hardline Loyalist Volunteer Force's six-month ceasefire.

LVF prisoners will now qualify for the controversial early release programme, which has so far resulted in the release of 201 terrorists.

The LVF had indicated to Ms Mowlam that it would decommission some of its weapons if she accepted as genuine its ceasefire, announced in May and declared permanent in August. An army council source said it would hand in some of its arms within weeks.

Ms Mowlam hopes that LVF disarmament, the first of any terrorist group, will put pressure on the IRA to begin decommissioning.

The arms impasse is jeopardising Sinn Fein's place in the power-sharing executive, and the row could undo the agreement, but Sinn Fein immediately quashed hopes that LVF disarmament could kick-start IRA decommissioning. Alex Maskey, the party's chief whip in the assembly, said that republicans were highly sceptical of the LVF, responsible for at least 10 murders in the past 12 months.

The LVF, strongest in Portadown, Co Armagh, was formed under Billy Wright at the height of the Drumcree crisis in 1996. It broke away from the Ulster Volunteer Force because it was opposed to its ceasefire, called in 1994.

The LVF was responsible for a spate of sectarian killings after Wright, aged 37, was murdered by the Irish National Liberation Army two days after Christmas last year. It was opposed to the agreement, but now says it is committed to peaceful means.

There are 22 LVF prisoners. Nineteen, including eight on remand, are at the Maze. Three more are held at Maghaberry Prison, charged with the murder in March of a fellow LVF prisoner.

The INLA will have to wait before its three-month ceasefire is recognised. Ms Mowlam is yet to be convinced it is genuine.

Almost half of paramilitary prisoners have now been freed under the accelerated release programme. All jailed terrorists are expected to be out by July 2000 — at which point the Maze will close, it was announced last week.

Despite the releases, no terrorist group has yet handed over a single bullet. Sinn Fein says there is no requirement in the agreement for the IRA to hand in any weapons before it takes up its two places in the shadow executive. Ulster Unionists insist that there has to be at least a start to decommissioning.

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's nominee to the International Commission on Decommissioning, returned to the fray with the most hardline Sinn Fein statement so far. He said there would be no IRA decommissioning, even as a gesture.

Mr McGuinness, out of action since breaking his leg in a charity football match last month, predicted growing unhappiness among nationalists and republicans if there were no move soon. They would see the agreement as not being "worth the paper it's written on".

He said: "Unfortunately, this issue is being used by Unionists as a blocking mechanism principally because they don't want Sinn Fein on the executive."

Remembrance of world war that shaped the century

John Ezard and Ian Traynor in Bonn

IN A DAY showered with poppies that turned the stones of Belgium blood-red again, the Queen led the century's final major act of remembrance for the first world war which shaped it.

She went to Flanders field for a commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the armistice on November 11 that ended the slaughter. She stood beneath the Menin Gate, the memorial to 55,000 missing British dead at Ieper, the Belgian town better known as Ypres, in the zone where 500,000 of the war's victims fell.

The petals that fell from the gate's high arch took more than five minutes to fall, as one descended for each of the 10 million soldiers who died on all sides. Then a British veteran, Arthur Halestrap, aged 100, rose to read falteringly the armistice poem: "They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old . . . we will remember them."

This was the last big commemoration expected to be held in the company of first world war veterans, now in their late 90s or turned 100. Given pride of place in both Paris and Belgium, they showed astonishing sprightliness.

Mr Halestrap, who lost his son John in the second world war, walks between five and seven miles every day. Fred Bunday, aged 97, goes line-dancing twice a week.

More sombrely, 101-year-old Robert Gelineau said: "It was a useless war," as he watched soldiers wearing France's old blue uniforms parade in front of the Arc de Triomphe before the Queen laid wreaths with President Chirac in a ring around the Eternal Flame.

An estimated 43 million Britons observed a two-minute silence. Debate in the House if Commons came to a halt. Railtrack and London Underground staff observed the silence, with passengers invited to join in. London buses pulled over to the side of the road if it was practical. No British Airways planes took off between 10.58 and 11.02.

But there were no meaningful remembrance services in Germany at all. In a country forever caught up in controversy and rows about its history, the first world war has become a virtual blank spot.

There were between 1.7 and 2 million dead German soldiers (roughly double the British dead), and yet there is barely a flicker of remembrance.

Martin Vogt, Darmstadt university history professor, explains: "We still have a problem, it's very hard to admit or commemorate defeats. With 1945 it's different because many people see that as a liberation [from the Nazis], not a defeat."

Downey's parting shot

David Hencke

THE media campaign to expose the cash-for-questions scandal has broken the corrupting influence of lobbyists in Parliament, Sir Gordon Downey, the retiring Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, concluded in his farewell report published last week.

But he warns the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges to guard against imposing soft penalties on erring ministers and MPs who break parliamentary rules.

Sir Gordon, who is 70 and steps down at the end of the month, was appointed by Parliament in the wake of the cash-for-questions scandal involving the Tory ministers Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith.

He says in his final report: "There is little doubt that Nolan [the peer whose report set up the new procedures] was right to regard financial relationships between members and lobbyists as a potentially corrupting influence.

"Many of the troubles encountered by Michael Grylls, Tim Smith, Neil Hamilton, Michael Brown and Andrew Bowden [all Tory MPs who lost their seats or retired at the last election] were largely attributable to their association with Ian Greer Associates [the now defunct lobbying company] acting on behalf of Mohamed Al Fayed. It may be that there were similar networks . . . which never came to light.

"To the best of my knowledge, the financial links with lobbyists have now been broken. Some non-financial links are proving embarrassing but at least the spectre of cash for influence through this route has fallen away."

Sir Gordon will be replaced next February by Elizabeth Filkin, aged 58, chief adjudicator investigating complaints against the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

Bill and Tony versus the world

IF BILL CLINTON is the Harry Houdini of world politics, then surely Saddam Hussein is the Pauline — the young damsel, repeatedly tied to the railway tracks in the face of an oncoming locomotive, somehow sprung to safety seconds before her death. Last weekend's events played out like a particularly nail-biting episode of the Perils Of Pauline, with Saddam once again cheating mortality — and thwarting the will of the international community. The B-52 bombers carrying multiple cruise missiles were in mid-air when the order to abort came through — a U-turn in the air.

The pattern is becoming repetitive. Baghdad blocks weapons inspectors. World leaders huff and puff in anger. Washington and London gear up to blow Saddam's house down. Saddam offers total climbdown. UN accepts it, then reads small print to discover climbdown is not total at all, but partial and conditional. Still, Saddam avoids carpet-bombing because moment has passed. Of course, the immediate reaction to that outcome is relief. Just one week after we remembered the dead of this bloody century, few were eager to add to the total. But the latest round of the Saddam saga has exposed some important weaknesses in the world community that extend far beyond Iraq.

At first, Iraq's defiance brought a reluctant unity to the five permanent members of the Security Council. Saddam Hussein was an offender with a long rap sheet, a proven record not only as a killer of his own people but as a regional bully prepared to invade Kuwait to the south and gas the Kurds to the north. His renewed blocking of the Unscom inspectors last month was a strike against the Permanent Five of the Security Council but also against Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General who personally agreed a compromise with him on this matter in February. Baghdad was giving the finger to them all. That is why China, Russia and France — who usually lend a more receptive ear to Iraq — were prepared, however reluctantly, to go along with the US and Britain to pound Baghdad into compliance. The genius of Saddam's eleventh-hour retreat was that he gave just enough to please the French-Russian-Chinese axis, while making sufficient demands to leave the British and the Americans dissatisfied. The effect was to split a coalition that had begun to glue itself together against him, and to expose the fault-line that now separates London and Washington from the rest of the world.

This is the problem which now confronts Tony Blair and Bill Clinton: how to bridge the gap between the English-speaking powers and the rest of the Security Council. Surely what is needed now is, first, an Iraqi implementation of its commitments — so that a world-threatening programme of chemical and biological weapon production can be seen and eliminated — followed by an effort by Britain and the US to listen to the concerns raised by Paris, Moscow and Beijing.

Their desire to see some end to the sanctions imposed on Baghdad since 1991, whose victim has been the Iraqi people themselves, cannot be waved aside. These two sides need to draw up a common position in time for the next showdown. While they are at it, our leaders need to work out a shared view of what should happen next, after possible bombing and after Saddam. And they need to reach such an understanding soon — before we have to witness another episode of a serial which is becoming painfully familiar.

Putting debt relief on a fast track

IT TAKES one catastrophe to remind the world of another. The devastating impact of Hurricane Mitch on the already poverty-stricken people of Central America has had one potential benefit. Its onslaught on the houses, the fields, the roads, the bridges, and the economic livelihood of the families of those who survived it has alerted donors in the richest countries to the slow-motion disaster that was already eroding the chances of a life of dignity in Honduras and Nicaragua. Debt burden condemns the poorest countries to a future with insufficient schools, hospitals, and other basic welfare provision as government budgets become skewed towards satisfying creditors first.

Six months ago the *Guardian* launched its campaign against the "New Slavery" and joined forces with the coalition Jubilee 2000 in calling on creditor nations to write off the debts of the poorest nations by the start of the next millennium. Honduras and Nicaragua, the two countries hardest hit by Hurricane Mitch, were on the list. Indeed, Nicaragua was something of a negative star. At $1,300 per person it has the world's highest level of debt per head of population.

Thanks largely to the UK Chancellor Gordon Brown, Britain's record on softening the debt burden has been better than most of the Group of Seven. He has argued that countries recovering from civil war, the "post-conflict nations", should get special terms. Nevertheless the Birmingham G7 summit this year produced less than we and the Jubilee 2000 coalition had hoped for. In August, with 500 days before the millennium, only six countries have started to receive the limited relief available under the World Bank's heavily-indebted poor countries initiative, known as HIPC.

So it is welcome that Mr Brown is now suggesting that the creditors recognise a category of "post-catastrophe countries" which would get fast-track relief. But in spite of its new announcements, the Government has a long way to go. Unlike France, which has written off the debt owed to it by Honduras and Nicaragua, and Cuba, which has written off Nicaragua's debt, Britain's proposed moratorium for Honduras and Nicaragua is only debt postponement, not debt reduction. The Government's talk of a trust fund into which Britain and other governments can pay money to help the Central Americans meet their obligations is only an accounting device to avoid writing the debts off.

What is needed now is a creditors' conference on Honduras and Nicaragua that can take up the idea for a "human development window" to be incorporated within HIPC. Initially proposed by Tanzania and Oxfam International for all high-debt countries, it would call for debt cancellation with the requirement that every dollar forgiven should be matched by at least 85 cents spent by the debtor government on poverty reduction, whether that means extra schools, housing, or hospitals. It would create a kind of benign structural adjustment to replace the International Monetary Fund's earlier programmes which required draconian cuts in government spending and have thrown millions of people in the poorest countries into even greater poverty. If such a special conference for Central America could later be matched by others for the rest of the HIPC countries, Hurricane Mitch might be seen as a turning point for good.

Radical pact

AS A PIECE of writing the joint statement by Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown is a slightly bland read — but two sentences leap out. The first brings the news that the Labour-Lib Dem committee which had previously confined itself to constitutional matters will now discuss much more: perhaps Europe, pensions, education, health and welfare. The second is a declaration that: "Our two parties will continue to offer different choices to the British people in the ballot box whenever the appropriate opportunity arises." This phrase is either the result of some sloppy drafting or a highly significant hint. It could mean cross-party coalitions in referendum campaigns or even electoral pacts — an epochal development in British politics. Or it might mean nothing at all: the document goes on to insist that there should be no narrowing of the choices available to British voters.

On any reading, the document marks a breakthrough. Thanks to its constitutional reform, the Government is already reshaping political life. Now Labour and the Liberal Democrats are looking forward to the world after the Jenkins report, a world of proportional representation in which parties have to work with, not against, each other.

Tribalists on both sides will object. Lib Dems want more than "consultation" in return for the inevitable blurring of identity that comes with co-operation. But Mr Ashdown is right: Lib Dems now have a chance to influence questions they have merely banged on about for a half century. Labourites need have no fear either. The move requires no great sacrifice by the Government, but it does enable Mr Blair to cast himself as an inclusive figure, able to transcend the old party lines. And, as the two men promise, co-operation between them makes the Conservatives ever more marginal, with "the ascendancy of progressive politics" ever more a reality. The 21st may be the "century of the radicals" after all.

Quiet elegy for the last of a dying breed

Peter Preston

DEARLY beloved: we are gathered here today to celebrate the life and death of one our nation's most enduring characters. He was a man of compassion and self-doubt. He took no decision lightly. He knew the world was a difficult place and he sought to make it better. But his day is done and his race is run. Brothers, we say goodbye to Mr Woolly Liberal.

The end, to be sure, has been a long time coming, the sickness a creeping sclerosis. Mr Woolly took to his bed in the early eighties as Nurse Thatcher battered the Wets with her bedpan. He got out of it to attend the launch party of "Faith in the City" but retired hurt almost immediately. He lit a candle for John Major, then blew it out.

Good old Woolly was never a political hack. He belonged to all parties, and to none. He was Jim Prior and Robert Runcie rolled into one. He believed in doing his best and listening to the other chap's point of view: really listening. He would sometimes change his mind or, more often, shift from one standpoint to no standpoint at all. His voice lives on when today's Archbishop of Canterbury talks women priests — or indeed anything requiring a decision — but only as a mocking echo.

RIP, Woolly. The culture shock of the Blair revolution was too much for you, and your feeble little heart stopped beating.

Consider, with sorrow and pity, the torture of his last few days. He believed, all his life, in a "fairer" electoral system. Something more balanced, more caring, more inclusive. And, at the close, it turned out to be the European Parliamentary Elections Bill. Fairness was getting on to the New Labour candidates' list behind closed doors. Inclusiveness was excluding anybody who got up the hierarchy's nose.

Was this — this curled-lip stitch-up — what he'd sought, all his life, to achieve? Was Woolly's fairness the axing of Dennis Canavan or the nobbling of Rhodri Morgan or the fixing of Red Ken? The final convulsions of doubt.

Fifteen years before, when the Benn tide had threatened to engulf him, and Ken Livingstone seemed to be standing on the steps of County Hall inviting Mrs T to close him down, Mr Liberal had briefly and privately wished that somebody would give the left a bloody nose. But his liberalism, his essential liberalism, wouldn't let him go that far. Let nation speak peace unto nation, and lions and lambs lie down together. Let men of goodwill sort things out — not be sorted, in the modern manner.

The final convulsion, though, came early on Monday morning, as Tony Blair swept Saddam Hussein's last scrap of paper from the table and vowed to start bombing, or else ... Dear Woolly was an internationalist. Not a pacifist, that would be going too far, but a believer in jaw-jaw and all that stuff. He gave copiously to Oxfam and empathised with the suffering masses of Iraq. He didn't believe in smart missiles or the higher wisdom of the Pentagon. He loved 10-day debates in the Security Council.

Woolly, you see, was not a figure for the next millennium. His compassion went beyond words. He needed, himself, to act compassionately too. He would give dossers in the Strand a 50-pence piece. He would try to Save the Children. Of course, that wasn't enough, he'd tell himself: but it was something — something which tied his beliefs, if any, to his personal deeds, if any. But that wasn't the New Labour he'd hoped for so fondly.

New Labour would talk tenderly about a better world, and hack the slats out of anyone who got in the way. New Labour would hymn the virtues of participation and openness, then slam the door on his fingers. New Labour wouldn't wring its hands: it would clench them and bop the awkward squad on the snout. New Labour was a different kind of liberalism.

These chaps (Woolly thought from his sickbed as the nineties wound on) say the things I believe in, but they don't do them. Freedom of Information? The greater constitution of the party lists? The sticky embrace of Captain Ashdown (who's even started to talk like them). They paid him court, to be sure: they brought flowers to the ward and spoke about the wonders of community. But then they went away and did something entirely different.

The buzz words were decision, hard choices, tough measures. They privatised the control of the skies and the Queen's planes while flew in them. And their most ardent supporters, the businessmen who loved them, had a litany to go with that. "In a year they'll thank me" for making them, the unwanted workers, redundant. They were high on necessary pain and effectiveness.

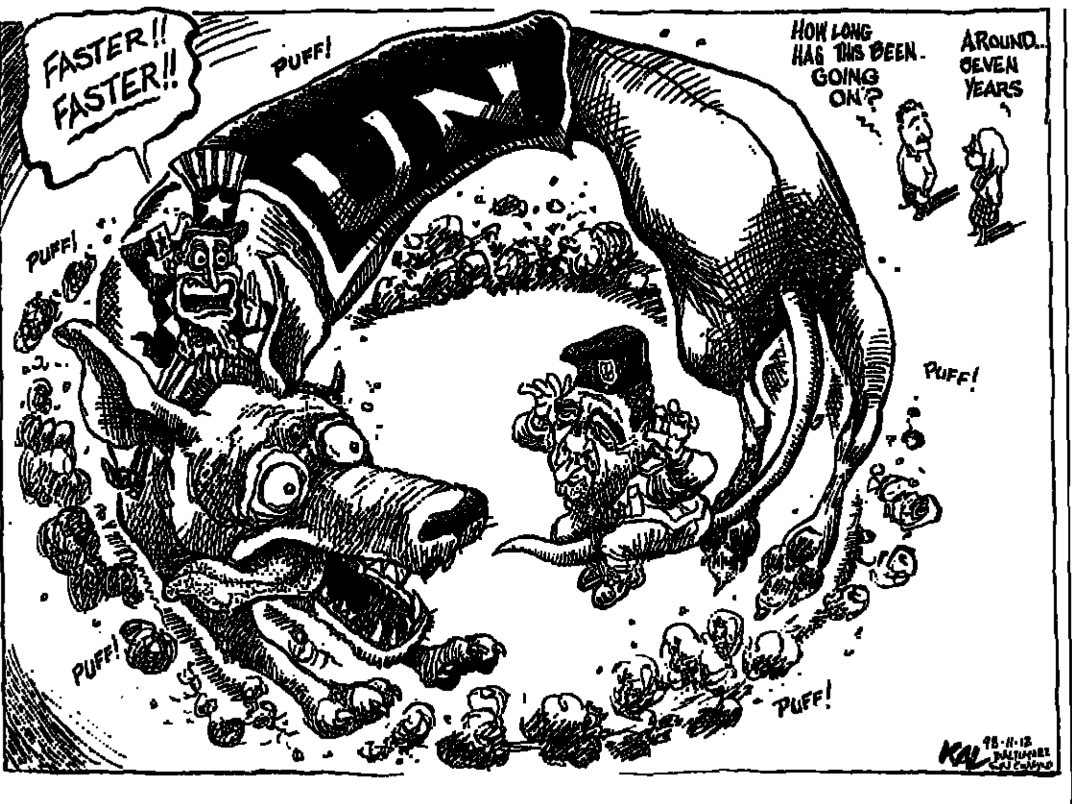
WOOLLY heard these words, but he could never quite make a pattern of them in his addled head. Could you save jobs by cutting jobs? Could you make the generality happier by kicking the minority on the knee? Could you let free speech burgeon by telling the gang at the back to shut up (and clear everything with Alastair Campbell first)?

He was not a ruthless man. He was a grey, often timorous fellow who saw both sides of any question. He knew that his liberalism usually involved a lot of agonising, and he agonised about that. He'd been trampled on all his days, trying his best.

Was this, then, it? The liberalism of Catholicism rather than the C of E? The religion of "Do this, because it's good for you"? The familiar liberalism of lawyers in a government run by lawyers, fellows convinced that their case — and only their case — was righteous? Or was he (as he often asked himself through the long sleepless nights) being unfair? For what, after all, had his way achieved? Wasn't it good to see people he approved of, at least in theory, knocking lumps out of their enemies, who were his enemies too?

Who cared about the necessity of the little list — or the quakings in the shanties of Baghdad? In a year, perhaps, they'd thank us. Doubt was his friend and his foe and, at the close, it gripped his ticker until it stopped beating.

Farewell, Woolly Liberal.



Mourning Begins for UNSCOM

ANALYSIS

Barton Gellman

IRAQ'S ostensible surrender last weekend, the fifth in a recurring drama during the Clinton presidency, disguises an outcome substantially unlike the earlier ones. This one marked the death throes of an experiment in compulsory disarmament without conquest.

The cease-fire that ended the Gulf War in 1991 left economic and military strangleholds on Iraq: an oil embargo and a United Nations team charged with expunging whole classes of weapons from Iraq's arsenal.

For more than seven years, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has struggled to break those holds. When the oil embargo survived his last attempt, on October 30, he tried to finish off the U.N. Special Commission, or UNSCOM, responsible for disarming him. Despite his formal climb-down last Saturday, American and foreign officials said that effort is succeeding.

Almost no one believes UNSCOM has the means to finish its work against Iraqi intransigence. The U.S. priority is to keep the oil embargo, which restricts Iraq to a minor regional power. For that UNSCOM need only certify — quite truthfully — that Iraq has not accounted fully for its ballistic missiles and nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programs.

Loath though it is to frame it this way, the Clinton administration's strategic imperative is to manage two kinds of long-term decline in its position against Iraq.

One is the decline of UNSCOM's diplomatic backing and its daily struggle on the ground in Iraq. The Clinton administration now shares the view of its Security Council rivals in Moscow, Beijing and Paris that UNSCOM's reach exceeded its grasp. The commission tried, in effect, to exercise the privileges of a conquering power even though former U.S. president George Bush chose not to topple Saddam Hussein and remake Iraq on the model of postwar Germany or Japan.

Seven years on, officials are beginning to speak of UNSCOM in the past tense. The Clinton administration may not be so blunt as Senator Richard G. Lugar (R-Indiana), who described the special commission as "toast," but one official spoke of "a post-UNSCOM world"; another said the arms panel "may have outlived its effectiveness."

"Had the coalition . . . replaced the [Iraqi] government, we could have concluded UNSCOM's mission in a matter of months," said a European diplomat whose diagnosis matches that of his counterparts in Washington. "Because we are not occupying the country, and because the resolutions of the U.N. all mention the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, we have been of the view all along that we can dismantle those weapons only if there is a degree of Iraqi cooperation."

A second decline, which began to influence U.S. policy in the Middle East more than a year ago, is America's reduced influence in the region. While still "an unrivaled power," as one senior policymaker put it, the United States no longer can count on "the Pax Americana that prevailed since the Gulf War."

'Had we replaced the Iraqi government we could have concluded UNSCOM's mission in a matter of months'

The U.S. supremacy that began the long cat-and-mouse game with Iraq arose from a unique confluence of favorable events. The aura of invincible American might, cultivated by the video-minded briefers of the Gulf War, faded with the ambiguous results of lesser skirmishes since. Russia's return to the region — as arms supplier, debt collector and diplomatic force — revived the competition for influence that had disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union. And despite the October 23 Israeli-Palestinian accord, America's role as regional peace broker has been diminished.

Even so, the U.S. position is improved for the moment in comparison to last winter's similar crisis with Iraq. "We've given the diplomatic approach a great deal of time to play out," muting French and Russian criticism, said one White House official. Expansion of the oil-for-food program to $10.5 billion a year, with U.N. control over Iraqi expenditures, "takes away the humanitarian card he was trying to play last year."

And with the Wye River accord, "no one can criticize us for not having made an extraordinary effort to bring about resumption of the peace process."

All these factors have made this a good time, by the administration's reckoning, to reconcile U.S. ends and means in the region without damaging the credibility of the U.S. or the Security Council.

America's primary strategic interest, officials said, is still to prevent the Baghdad regime from posing a threat — as it did when it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 — to the Arabian peninsula, the world's major petroleum resource.

Measured by conventional forces, the administration makes a convincing case that it has that objective well in hand. The destruction of the Gulf War and the $120 billion in lost revenues as a result of the oil embargo have left Iraq's army far from its putative status — as the Bush administration declared it — as the fourth-largest in the world.

Anthony H. Cordesman, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, estimates that Iraq would have had to import $12 billion in arms since 1991 merely to sustain the diminished armed forces Saddam Hussein had after the rout suffered in Kuwait. To sustain Iraq's prewar levels, Cordesman estimates, it would have had to import nearly $48 billion in arms.

As Iraq's army and air force have declined, the U.S. has built up a peacetime military force in the region — even apart from the buildup underway now — that is far more powerful than before.

U.S. to Allow Visitors from Central America to Stay

William Branigin and Roberto Suro

WITH four Central American countries reeling from the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, the Clinton administration is working out the final details of a plan to offer temporary refuge to hundreds of thousands of their citizens living in the United States, coupled with a regional aid package designed to prevent a major immigration crisis.

The Clinton Administration plans to grant limited immigration status to citizens of the affected nations in order to avoid further disrupting the Central American economies by sending people back to places with extensive damage, no jobs and a mounting threat of disease, according to senior administration officials.

The refuge policy would allow citizens of Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador who are already in the Unites States, both legally and illegally, to remain and work without fear of deportation.

In the past, similar protection has been offered to people from strife-torn countries in Eastern Europe and Africa, usually for a year at a time and subject to renewal. But as officials finalize details of the plan, they want to avoid creating a "magnet" for illegal immigration by giving the impression that the United States is tacitly welcoming all hurricane victims.

"It would have to be done in a way that it would not be seen as an open invitation," said Russ Bergeron, a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Questions such as how long the temporary refuge would last and whether it would apply differently to citizens of the various countries are still being resolved. The most likely vehicle is a provision of law known as "temporary protected status" enacted in 1990, that allows the attorney general to determine that foreign nationals can remain in the United States because of dangers in their home countries due to armed conflict or environmental disaster.

Central American advocacy groups say the more extensive temporary protected status could cover around 400,000 people, including more than 90,000 illegal immigrants from Honduras. These groups hope the protection will extend for at least 18 months, giving them time to lobby Congress for a permanent amnesty. They say it is also in the U.S. interest to let these people stay and work, since they collectively send home millions of dollars in remittances vital to their countries' economic recovery.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials have begun watching for signs of any large-scale movements of people across Central American borders. The scope of the devastation — as many as 3 million people homeless and more than $4 billion worth of damage from flooding and mudslides — has raised concerns that unless aid to the region is massive, immediate and sustained, hundreds of thousands of Central Americans could eventually head north in an effort to reach the United States.

IMF Bailout for Brazil

Paul Blustein

THE International Monetary Fund and the Clinton administration last week unveiled a $41.5 billion loan package for Brazil, setting up a crucial test of their ability to halt the spread of global financial turmoil after similar rescues failed in Russia and Indonesia.

The effort to stabilize Brazil's economy, the largest in Latin America, represents a major initiative to keep the region from succumbing to the financial panic that has struck Asia and other emerging economies. Global financial officials fear that a Brazilian collapse would swiftly undermine investor confidence worldwide and send markets, which have recently stabilized, into another tailspin.

The IMF's credibility, and that of its powerful backers at the U.S. Treasury, is on the line with this package as never before. Earlier rescue packages have drawn fire from critics for either being too protective of big-money investors or ineffective in halting panics.

This time officials have been at pains to distinguish Brazil from Russia, where the IMF's $22 billion rescue effort last summer ended disastrously after Moscow defaulted on a portion of its debts and devalued the ruble.

The debacle in Russia started to threaten Brazil in September and early October when about $30 billion — more than one-third of Brazil's hard-currency reserves — fled the country amid jitters about the government's ability to pay its debts and maintain the value of its currency, the real.

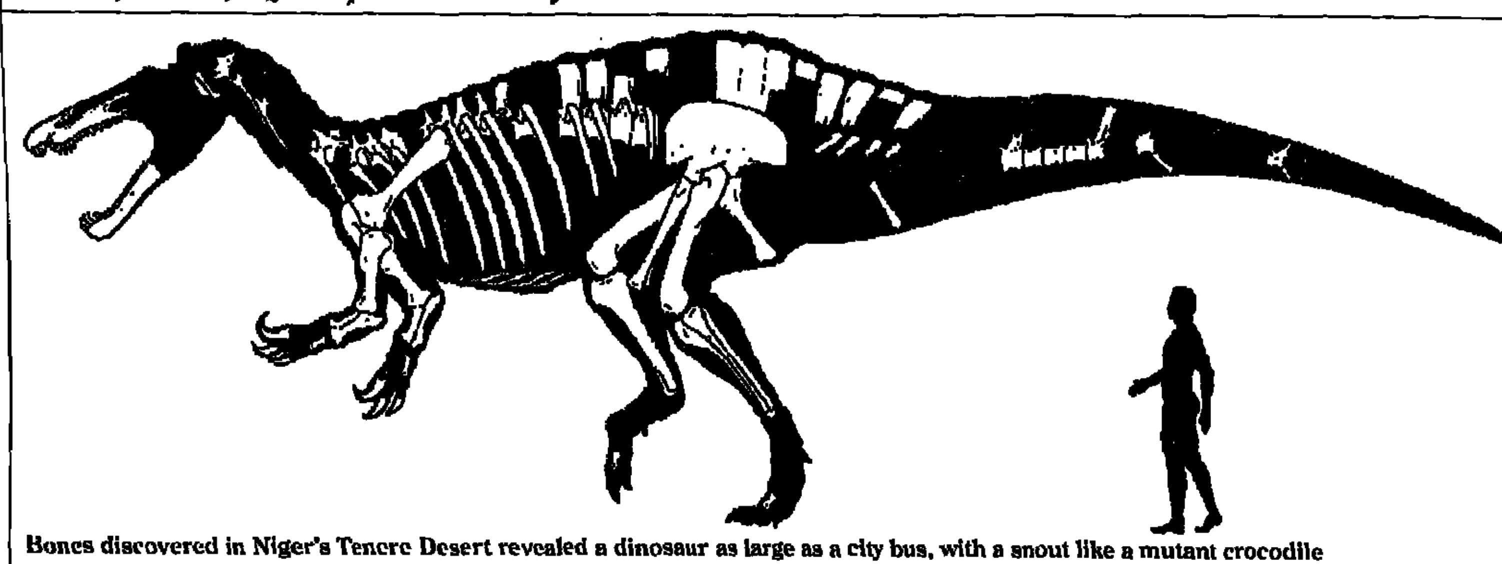
U.S. and IMF officials noted the Brazil package differed in some key respects from earlier rescues. It enables Brazil to borrow vast sums upfront — provided reforms are moving quickly — if it needs to halt a panic, instead of waiting for the money to be parceled out according to a fixed schedule.

And in an effort to convince investors there was no further need to worry about Brazil's ability to pay its obligations, IMF officials said the package was more than adequately funded.

"This amount is significantly above the amounts that we could envisage being needed to deal with events that might occur," said Stanley Fischer, the IMF's deputy managing director, adding that the IMF wanted "to provide reassurance to the markets that you're not sort of slicing it very, very thin."

But the move nevertheless represents a major gamble. Brazil has more than $250 billion in debts coming due in the next several months and the IMF is essentially betting investors will be satisfied enough with the terms of the package to keep their money in the country. The loan package also represents a huge commitment of taxpayer dollars — nearly twice as much as in Russia's case, though not as much as the $57 billion international bailout for South Korea.

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Bones discovered in Niger's Tenere Desert revealed a dinosaur as large as a city bus, with a snout like a mutant crocodile

Huge New Species of Dinosaur Found

Curt Suplee

FROM beneath the wind-whipped dunes of western Africa, fossil-hunters have unearthed a previously unknown species of dinosaur: a 100-million-year-old predator the size of a city bus with 16-inch, hook-shaped thumb claws and a snout like a mutant crocodile.

At 36 feet long and 12 feet high, and weighing an estimated five tons, *Suchomimus tenerensis* was at least as big as the average Tyrannosaurus. But its lifestyle was considerably different; scientists believe it preferred a diet of fish.

"It's a dinosaur trying hard to be a crocodile," said Paul C. Sereno of the University of Chicago, who led the international 18-strong expedition that discovered the creature's remains in remote central Niger late last year.

The find adds a striking new specimen to a very rare and mysterious splinter group of dinosaurs — the long-snouted, narrow-mouthed spinosaurs. Only three fragmentary examples were known before December 4, 1997, when expedition member David Varricchio came across what looked like a spinosaur thumb claw.

It was just sitting there, "exposed over the course of centuries by wind and sand, waiting for anybody to discover it," Sereno said. If the rest was nearby, the world would "have a chance to see finally what one of these strange, fish-eating predators looked like."

His group began digging. Dozens of tons of rock and dirt later, they had amassed 400 pieces of bone, yielding a 70 percent complete skeleton, including the hugely powerful four-foot-long forelegs with bones several inches thick and three claws on each limb. "That's the strongest forelimb of any predatory dinosaur," Sereno said.

The results, including a full-scale skeletal model, were displayed last week at a news conference at the National Geographic Society, which partially funded the research, and the find is reported in the latest issue of the journal Science.

"Any new spinosaur material is particularly welcome, because they are such strange animals," said Mark Norell, chairman of the department of vertebrate paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. "It shows that the spinosaurs were much more diverse than we'd thought."

Several tantalizing spinosaur fossils had been found in central Niger since the 1950s. Large expeditions, however, have been few. The Tenere Desert is one of the more forbidding landscapes on Earth, a bleak expanse of sun-parched, migratory dunes and exposed rock.

But during the mid-Cretaceous, when Suchomimus was flourishing, it was positively lush. "There were stands of trees, and plains that were probably fern-covered," Sereno said.

There were broad rivers that accommodated several types of plant-eating dinosaurs, a flying reptile called a pterosaur with a 12-foot wing span, and numerous marine creatures including a six-foot-long freshwater shark and an enormous primitive fish called a coelacanth. In addition, Suchomimus "shared the environment with huge crocodiles, 50 feet long," Sereno said. "Their skulls alone are six feet long."

Suchomimus (from the Greek for "crocodile-mimic") belongs to the familiar theropod group of bipedal carnivores that includes Tyrannosaurus and Velociraptor, and which is thought to comprise the ancestors of modern birds. But it is also part of the puzzling spinosaur sub-group. These two- to six-ton animals were distinguished by shallow skulls, long, narrow snouts with conical teeth, and a hard palate or plate of bone on the roof of the mouth.

The classic theropods, by contrast, had blade-shaped, serrated teeth and high skulls, both nicely adapted to shredding the flesh of their prey.

It is likely that Suchomimus and the three other known spinosaurs evolved long, thin mouths and conical teeth to snatch and hold fish (or possibly small terrestrial dinosaurs). The narrow snout seems designed to move easily through water in search of prey. And teeth of that shape "function better as piercers and graspers than as slicers and slashers — that is, as meat hooks rather than steak knives," paleontologist Thomas R. Holtz Jr. of the University of Maryland writes in a commentary in Science.

Pundits Write Off Newt at Their Peril

OPINION
David S. Broder

OVER the years, the personal shortcomings and the political miscalculations that forced Newt Gingrich to bail out as speaker of the House have been discussed and documented so often they barely need repeating. From the hubris that led him into the fatal shutdown of the government in 1995 to the folly of his leading the Republican drive for impeachment, it is a well-known tale.

But Gingrich is far from finished, and now seems the ideal time to explain why. I can sum it up in two words: Richard Nixon.

The parallels between the two men are striking and — if one circumstance beyond Gingrich's control turns out right for him — the story line could be the same.

Nixon was 47 when he lost the presidential election to John F. Kennedy in 1960. Two years later, when he was defeated in the race for governor of California, he was 49, six years younger than Gingrich is today. For eight years as Dwight Eisenhower's vice president, Nixon was the second most prominent American politician — and, by all odds, the most controversial. For the six years of Bill Clinton's presidency, Gingrich has been the same. The tactics and rhetoric of both Gingrich and Nixon drew strong criticism within Republican ranks; they were distrusted by both the progressive and conservative wings of their party; and both were thoroughly reviled by the Democrats.

The defeats Nixon suffered in 1960 and 1962 were far more damaging than Gingrich's abandoning the speaker's chair to atone for Republican midterm election losses. And yet Nixon came back to win the presidency in 1968.

If Gingrich is to return in a similar manner, there is but one necessary pre-condition — and this is biggest uncontrolled variable in Gingrich's future: the next presidential election. Gingrich cannot be a plausible presidential candidate in 2000 any more than Nixon could have been in 1964. Nixon could emerge only from the wreckage of Barry Goldwater's defeat. If the GOP elects a president two years from now, the parade will have passed Gingrich by. But if the Democrats keep the White House, the way back for Gingrich is clear:

First, he has the capacity to retain and embellish his Nixonian reputation as the "big ideas, big issues" man in the Republican Party. He does this by thinking, writing and speaking on the large challenges facing the country and the world, while most of the others are struggling with the minutiae of congressional legislation and state government.

Second, he has the financial and organizational base to remain an important player. Nixon survived his twin defeats because of the network of political friends on Rosemary Woods' Rolodex. But he had only a few financial patrons in the early 1960s and a staff of one, John Sears.

Gingrich will be kept alive by the same press he claims has been out to get him

Gingrich has the best fund-raising list in the Republican Party and a ready-made vehicle in GOPAC, the machine he used to create a GOP House majority.

Third, Gingrich is, as Nixon was, the best traveling campaigner in his party. He draws crowds and raises money for GOP candidates as no one else can. If the Democrats keep the White House in 2000, you can bet that Gingrich will be much in demand in the elections of 2002. Nixon established his pre-emptive claim on the 1968 nomination by being the No. 1 Republican campaigner in the congressional elections of 1966. Thirty-six years later, Gingrich may be able to do the same.

Fourth, Gingrich, like Nixon, can count on the enmity of Democrats to sustain his popularity in his own party. Just as Nixon proudly wore the bull's eye the Democrats had pinned on his chest, Gingrich will be helped among Republicans by being the continuing target of Democratic barbs.

Fifth — and here's a surprise — Gingrich, like Nixon, will be kept alive by the same press he claims has been out to get him. A generation ago, a platoon of reporters had made a living for years covering Nixon — and the habit was impossible to break. They went to him, as a private citizen, knowing they'd get usable quotes and interesting ideas from a man who was more intriguing to the public than any Republican then in office.

When the cliches of the post-Gingrich Republican officeholders begin to pall, which may be soon, this generation of reporters will beat a path to Gingrich's door and, over time, help cement his reputation as Mr. Republican.

A good friend at The Wall Street Journal, Alan Otten, said the biggest mistake he ever made was throwing out his Nixon files after the California gubernatorial election in 1962. Dumping the Gingrich files would be just as dumb today.

States Close to Tobacco Settlement

Saundra Torry and John Schwartz

THE nation's leading tobacco companies and eight attorneys general reached agreement last week on the major provisions of a $206 billion deal designed to end a massive legal assault on the industry by more than three dozen states.

The deal — which would become the largest legal settlement in U.S. history — will only go ahead with the approval of those states with lawsuits pending against the industry. But many observers believe a majority of state attorneys general will decide to settle rather than continue to fight the powerful industry in court.

The proposed settlement is far narrower than either the unsuccessful deal proposed last year or the failed Senate legislation. Those measures would have forced huge increases in the price of cigarettes, greatly restricted tobacco advertising and marketing, and imposed financial penalties if youth smoking rates did not fall.

The new proposal would, however, solve the tobacco industry's most threatening legal problem, pour billions of dollars into state treasuries, and impose at least some restrictions on tobacco advertising and marketing. It would ban tobacco billboards, transit advertisements and cartoon figures, such as Joe Camel.

Washington state attorney general Christine Gregoire (Democrat), one of the chief negotiators, said the deal, if approved, would achieve "historic public health gains" and offer "the single largest economic recovery in history."

Critics say the marketing concessions are mild compared to what the industry offered to give up two years ago in a settlement that collapsed in Congress.

Smokers may also soon find they are being asked to pay for the settlement. The deal doesn't require a price hike as the failed 1997 tobacco settlement would have. But analysts expect one — or a series of small rises — anyway. The experts are estimating that a 35 cent-per-pack increase would be required.

Pennsylvania anti-smoking activist Bill Godshall pronounced the deal "terrible for taxpayers and not good for public health." He and others are lobbying state officials to reject it, arguing that states would do better by taking their cases to trial, or even settling them individually.

Others cautioned against reacting negatively to a deal they feel helpless to stop. Former Food and Drug Administration commissioner David Kessler, who was at the forefront of efforts to strengthen the 1997 settlement, said he has no strong feelings this time. "It's all about money," he said, "and there's very little in it for public health."

Mary Aronson, a litigation analyst, said the critical issue "is how many states agree. If not enough do or key ones don't, then the whole thing unravels."

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The U.S. came close to defeating its drug problem when it tried treating addicts, writes **Michael Massing**

Washington's More Enlightened Days

FEW AMERICAN cities have been more devastated by illegal drug use than Washington. Abusers of heroin, crack and cocaine have fed robbery and burglary rates, sent child welfare caseloads soaring and clogged courts and jails. They also have overwhelmed the city's treatment centers: of the District's estimated 65,000 substance abusers, barely 10 percent can be accommodated by local treatment programs today.

It wasn't always like this. Hard as it may be to believe, a little more than 25 years ago the District fought the drug war successfully with a comprehensive treatment system that was considered a model for the nation. The system's brief but remarkable history provides compelling evidence of just how effective treatment can be in reducing drug abuse and crime.

Today, of course, drug treatment is not held in high regard. From Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's bitter attacks on methadone programs in New York City to President Clinton's utter indifference in the White House, treatment seems the least favored weapon in the war on drugs. Of the $16 billion the federal government is spending this year to fight drugs, fully two-thirds goes for enforcement and interdiction, and just one-third for treatment and prevention. Next year's budget will be even more lopsided: Congress voted $942 million in emergency appropriations for drug enforcement. Treatment will receive an increase of a mere $275 million.



Nixon: ordered drug treatment for addicted GIs from Vietnam

Lost in this game of numbers is any recognition of the real benefits a full-service treatment system could have for Washington and other cities. But they are clear enough from the one time such an approach was tried.

In the late 1960s, Washington, like many other cities, was gripped by a heroin epidemic. At the time, treatment was all but unavailable. In Chicago, however, a pioneering psycho-pharmacologist named Jerome Jaffe had set up a network of clinics offering the synthetic narcotic methadone and other treatments to help addicts get off heroin. Impressed, Washington decided to set up a small-scale version in the District, and in the fall of 1969, methadone became available in the nation's capital for the first time.

The program soon expanded, thanks to the support of the Nixon White House. It's not that Richard Nixon had any special compassion for drug addicts. But during the 1968 campaign, he had promised to reverse the steep rise in the nation's crime rate and had singled out the District for special attention. Once in office, his top aides advised him that drug prevention was a sure way of cutting crime.

On February 19, 1970, the Narcotics Treatment Administration (NTA) opened its doors, offering mainly methadone but also residential treatment and drug-free outpatient care. The system was immediately swamped.

That same year crime in the District fell by 5.2 percent — the first such decrease in years. D.C. police officials credited the expansion of the police force, the use of more aggressive tactics and the availability of drug treatment.



Methadone programs help addicts get off heroin

Armed with these results, the Nixon aide who had set up the NTA, Egil "Bud" Krogh Jr., began lobbying for a national treatment offensive. The White House was at first reluctant, but, shaken by reports that as many as 10 to 15 percent of the GIs then returning from Vietnam were addicted to heroin, Nixon announced on June 17, 1971, that he was setting up a special-action office under the direction of Jaffe to expand services for addicts. Over the next year, Jaffe spent hundreds of millions of government dollars to open methadone clinics and residential programs around the country. By the fall of 1972, treatment was available nationwide to all addicts who wanted it.

In addition, the Nixon administration successfully attacked the suppliers of heroin, including the infamous French Connection. But fully two-thirds of the government's resources went on stopping the demand for drugs.

The impact was immediate. Throughout 1972, the number of District residents dying from heroin-related overdoses declined month by month; in September of that year, the city recorded not a single heroin death. The city's crime rate, meanwhile, declined a remarkable 26.9 percent for the year. (Nationally, crime fell by 3 percent in 1972 — the first such decline in 17 years.) By 1973, the heroin epidemic in the District — as in the nation as a whole — was ebbing.

That, however, was the system's high point. In 1973, when Jaffe left the government, the NTA quickly lost its focus. It was further hurt by cuts in federal treatment. Under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, the system completely collapsed, and enforcement absorbed 80 percent of its budget.

Just as treatment was lagging, crack hit Washington and other cities. By 1989, the crack scourge was causing such alarm that President George Bush vowed to stop it. William Bennett, his drug czar, decided to make the District of Columbia a "test case" for his policy. To that end, he proposed a $100-million plan for the city, with some of the money going to more treatment. Unlike Krogh, however, Bennett failed to involve local officials, and the D.C. government — led by a mayor convicted of crack possession in 1990 — was rudderless.

Today, the District's treatment system is a shambles. Residential facilities are so overwhelmed that many drug offenders — mandated to treatment by judges — languish in prison for months for lack of a bed. The crush is due in part to bureaucratic inefficiency, but even more to inadequate funding. Between 1993 and 1998, the District's Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration's budget fell from $31.3 million to $19.7 million.

The crisis is hardly limited to the District. Today, the U.S. has an estimated 4 million hard-core users of heroin, crack, cocaine and methamphetamine. While making up only 20 percent of all the drug users in the country (the rest being mainly recreational users), these chronic users account for an estimated 75 percent of all the drugs consumed, as well as most of the crime and other associated problems.

At the moment, the nation's treatment programs can accommodate only about 50 percent of these users. In other words, nearly 2 million people who might benefit from help are unable to get it. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, making up this difference would cost an additional $3.4 billion a year — more than 10 times the amount appropriated by Congress.

Could a return to the approach and funding patterns of the Nixon era work today? Much has changed. There are many more addicts than in the early 1970s. And those addicts have many more problems, from homelessness and mental illness to AIDS and tuberculosis. What's more, many of today's users are hooked on crack and cocaine, for which treatments like methadone are useless. Nonetheless, study after study has confirmed the cost-effectiveness of treatment in dealing with addiction.

In 1996, for instance, the U.S. government, in a study of hard-core users entering treatment, found that the number who used cocaine fell from 39.5 percent before treatment to 17.8 percent a year later; for heroin, the rate went from 23.6 percent to 12.6 percent.

A 1994 Rand Corp. study found drug treatment was seven times more cost-effective than domestic law enforcement, 10 times more effective than interdiction, and 23 times more effective than drug-suppression efforts in countries that supply drugs.

America Opts for Alternative Medicine

Susan Okie

USE OF "alternative" treatments such as herbal supplements, massage therapy and megavitamins is increasing dramatically and visits to alternative practitioners have become more common than visits to the family doctor, according to a new survey.

At the same time, scientific attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of such therapies are starting to separate those that work from those that do not.

The studies were among a half-dozen published last week in the Journal of the American Medical Association in a special issue dedicated to alternative medicine. It marked the first such effort by a mainstream U.S. medical journal and was an attempt to meet doctors' need for high-quality scientific information on treatments that more and more patients are trying, said the editor, George Lundberg.

An estimated 83 million American adults — more than four out of 10 — used some form of alternative medical treatment last year, according to the new survey by a Harvard research team. They reported that visits to practitioners of alternative therapies, from herbal medicines to "energy healing," have increased 47 percent since 1990, propelled chiefly by middle-aged, health-conscious baby boomers. Half of the people between age 35 and 49 reported of using at least one of the surveyed treatments last year. The majority of users said they were turning to the therapies to prevent future illnesses rather than to treat current ones.

Jeff Sherman, 46, a real estate developer from McLean, said he has used acupuncture and homeopathy to relieve headaches and dizziness. He said many of his friends have also tried alternative therapies.

"I think we're all of the age, and we know enough about medicine, that we're willing to consider that perhaps Western medicine doesn't have the only answer," he said.

The researchers estimated that Americans spent $27 billion, most of it not reimbursed by insurance companies, on alternative treatments last year. Among the fastest-growing therapies were herbal remedies, massage, megavitamins, relaxation techniques and "spiritual healing".

"Consumers need and deserve better information on what works and what doesn't," said Senator Tim Harkin, Democrat of Iowa, who sponsored the legislation that created the Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health in 1991.

Last month, President Clinton signed a law upgrading the office to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and also increasing its annual budget from $20 million to $50 million.

Only about 40 percent of people who use alternative therapies tell their doctors, the survey found. And as many as 15 million people who take prescription drugs also are using herbs or high-dose vitamins, raising concerns about possible side effects from combining treatments.

The six studies tested various alternative therapies using a classic research design, the randomized clinical trial in which one group of patients receives a treatment and another group receives a placebo. Some of the results were surprising.

For instance, one study found that moxibustion, a traditional Chinese therapy in which an herb, *Artemisia vulgaris*, was burned next to an "acupuncture point" on the toe, proved safe and effective for stimulating fetuses in the wombs of pregnant women to turn over from a breech (feet-first) position to a head-first position, which is safer for delivery, said Francesco Cardini, an Italian gynecologist who conducted the study in China.

After two weeks, breech fetuses had turned over in 75 percent of the 130 women who received moxibustion daily or twice a day but in only 48 percent of 130 women who didn't get the treatment, he said.

"This treatment is quite strange for us, but it is easy, cheap, safe and can be done at home," said Cardini. "If it fails to attain the result, another therapy can be done later."

In another study, a stretching regimen based on yoga was found to help relieve hand pain and weakness produced by carpal tunnel syndrome, which is caused by compression of a nerve at the wrist.

But spinal manipulation by chiropractors was not shown to relieve tension headaches. The herb, *Garcinia cambogia*, commonly found in supplements marketed to dieters was no more effective than a placebo for promoting weight loss. And acupuncture turned out to be no better than a placebo for pain caused by nerve damage in people with AIDS.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Target aid where it will do good

Donors are giving up on aid, but **Joseph Stiglitz** argues that it can benefit countries that are well-run

FOREIGN aid is at an all-time low. More than 50 years after the "aid era" began with the Marshall Plan in 1947, development assistance has tumbled to less than a quarter of 1 per cent of major donors' gross national product, the smallest share ever.

Among the reasons for this drop, one stands out: the assumption that aid does not work very well.

It is true that aid has been an unmitigated failure under some conditions, but it has been a spectacular success in others.

A new World Bank report, Assessing Aid, aims to show how development assistance can be used more effectively, by understanding why aid works well in Bolivia or Uganda, for example, but has little or no impact in Nigeria or Zambia.

Rather than starting with the question "does aid work?", Assessing Aid begins with "when does aid work best?" The answer is needed urgently. Despite great strides in poverty reduction in the past 50 years, more than a billion people still live in extreme poverty — on less than $1 a day. Even more lack basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity and schooling.

This new focus on the circumstances under which aid works changes the nature of the debate. Rather than arguing for more aid or less assistance, Assessing Aid suggests that donors should concentrate on providing more effective aid.

Assessing Aid finds foreign aid has the strongest impact on growth in developing countries with sound policies and institutions — for example, macroeconomic stability, openness to trade, secure property rights, absence of corruption, to name a few important ones. In countries with poor policies — that is, with poor incentives for production — financial aid has a much weaker impact. To maximise poverty reduction, financial aid should favour countries such as India, Ethiopia and Uganda, which are poor and have sound economic policies. Because nearly 7 per cent of the world's poor live in countries with sound policy environments, targeting assistance to these countries would have a tremendous impact on global poverty.

Yet in 1996 donors gave only small amounts of assistance to countries with good policies. Reformist countries such as Ethiopia or Uganda received less aid per capita than poor countries with weak policies. Rather than rushing in alongside policy reforms, aid seems to taper out as reforms are adopted.

Opponents of foreign aid may argue that Assessing Aid, by exploring how to use aid more effectively, gives licence to donors to decrease their aid budgets. In fact, the report encourages donors to contribute more aid where it will have the most impact. Increasing aid to countries which can use it effectively has very real consequences for the poor. For example, allocating $10 billion in aid under the current system would lift about 7 million people per year out of poverty. But if the same amount of money were targeted at poor countries with sound economic policies, the number of people to leave the ranks of the poor would be about 25 million.

So why don't countries end foreign aid to poor countries with bad policies? One reason is that donors hope that aid will induce policy reform. Unfortunately, money has proved to be ineffective in generating reform. Zambia is a typical example. Foreign aid increased steadily — reaching 11 per cent of real GDP in the early 1990s. Policy, however, got worse throughout this period. Despite a series of loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, there was no real improvement in policy until a new government came to power in the early 1990s.

In these difficult environments, effective assistance must encompass more than just money or projects. It must also focus on ideas or knowledge creation. The ideas side of aid is critical for helping countries reform and helping communities provide effective public services such as education, health, and water.

Vietnam is one success story. It initiated a homegrown reform programme in the 1980s. Sweden and the United Nations Development Programme provided policy advice and by 1998 the poverty rate had fallen to 30 per cent of households from 55 per cent in 1992. The country's experience is part of a worldwide trend in the 1990s toward economic reform that has enabled a large number of countries to use financial assistance to reduce poverty.

When aid is used to champion reform at the local and national level, to create the knowledge necessary for effective development and to engage civil society in the reform process, it can dramatically improve the lives of the poor.

Joseph Stiglitz is senior vice-president and chief economist of the World Bank in Washington DC

Pacific Rim tariff talks break down

Charlotte Denny and agencies

PACIFIC Rim countries failed to clinch a trade deal seen as crucial in convincing world markets that the region is still committed to opening its borders to foreign goods, despite experiencing the worst financial crisis for 50 years.

After four days of talks in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, officials from 16 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation organisation were unable to resolve Japanese objections to a deal which would have reduced tariffs covering $1,500 billion of global trade.

The Japanese government, which unveiled a $197 billion stimulus package on Monday to try to get its recession-bound economy back on track, objected to cutting tariffs on wood and fish products. In a face-saving compromise, the Apec ministers agreed to send their proposals to the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation for consideration.

The disagreement has put the United States, the deal's biggest supporter, at loggerheads with Japan. Tariff cuts in wood and fish would require politically sensitive reforms at a time when the Japanese economy is already under strain.

Tokyo's stimulus package, the second in six months, includes $50 billion in income and corporate tax cuts, nearly $150 billion in local and central government measures, and $165 spending coupons for each Japanese child.

However, Moody's Investors Service, the credit rating agency, on Tuesday downgraded Japan's triple A debt ratings to Aa1, citing its deteriorating fiscal stance and inability to its extricate itself from an eight-year economic downturn.

The cut in Japan's credit ratings has sounded the alarm that the government may be digging itself in too deep as it tries to prop up its waning economy.

Some analysts agreed with Moody's action. Japan may be the world's largest creditor nation with no external debt, but they said the Japanese were facing a national debt crisis in which they owed themselves too much money.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates November 16	Sterling rates November 9
Australia	2.6153-2.6184	2.6208-2.6238
Austria	19.64-19.65	19.69-19.71
Belgium	57.57-57.66	57.72-57.81
Canada	2.6065-2.6092	2.5441-2.5468
Denmark	10.61-10.62	10.63-10.65
France	9.36-9.37	9.38-9.39
Germany	2.7916-2.7936	2.7992-2.8014
Hong Kong	12.96-12.97	12.84-12.64
Ireland	1.1221-1.1241	1.1242-1.1261
Italy	2,762-2,764	2,769-2,771
Japan	200.75-200.82	201.16-201.41
Netherlands	3.1475-3.1500	3.1559-3.1581
New Zealand	3.1096-3.1149	3.0913-3.0966
Norway	12.48-12.49	12.38-12.38
Portugal	286.29-286.57	285.92-287.29
Spain	237.41-237.67	237.83-238.01
Sweden	13.51-13.53	13.10-13.12
Switzerland	2.2981-2.2999	2.3128-2.3154
USA	1.6751-1.6758	1.6691-1.6698
ECU	1.4187-1.4202	1.4233-1.4250

FTSE100 Share Index up 76.6 at 5510.5. FTSE 250 Index down 99.3 at 4885.6. Gold up $4.00 at $296.60

Economics, the imprecise science

Larry Elliott

IT IS 70 years since Alexander Fleming revolutionised medicine through the discovery of penicillin. Today the use of antibiotics is taken for granted.

The contrast between medicine and economics is startling. One of Fleming's contemporaries was Maynard Keynes and, for a time after the second world war, it seemed Keynesianism could do for the economy what penicillin did for public health.

But, as the century ends, it is clear that something has gone wrong. The big problems of growth and unemployment remain unsolved, and the complexity of modern economics seems to be in inverse proportion to its usefulness. In his book on British economists from Alfred Marshall onwards — the appropriately titled Charlatans Or Saviours?* — Roger Middleton notes that when the Economic Journal was first published in 1890 only 1.7 per cent of the papers required a knowledge of algebra but by the time of the EJ's centenary this had risen to 72.6 per cent.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this. But as Keynes himself put it: "Too large a proportion of recent 'mathematical' economics are merely concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols."

In our dumbed-down culture, even the simplest piece of algebra is wrongly viewed as esoteric gibberish. Without some rigour and some structure, economics would be in an even more parlous state. The key is to accept its limitations and use other branches of the social sciences to improve our understanding of what is happening.

In his latest book, Paul Ormerod tries to do just that. Butterfly Economics* is subtitled A New General Theory of Social and Economic Behaviour and, like the original General Theory of Keynes, tries to take up the ground between formalism and empiricism.

His starting point is the behaviour of a colony of ants given the choice of two equally sized piles of food, placed at precisely the same distance from the nest. The ants are free to choose between the two piles, which are replenished to their original size after every visit.

What is likely to happen? The ants might divide 50-50 between the piles. Or they might divide in some other proportion, which would remain fixed because the ants knew the food stock would be replenished. What actually happened was that the proportion visiting one site fluctuated apparently randomly. Ormerod says each ant had three choices — to visit the food pile it previously visited, to be persuaded by the behaviour of other ants to try the other pile, or to try the other pile of its own volition.

Further, he argues that what goes for the ants goes for individuals and firms as well. The book illustrates the point by looking at the issue of crime, where there has been a long-running argument between those who think high unemployment and criminality are correlated, and those who say reported crime remained low in the 1930s even though unemployment was much higher than today.

Ormerod argues the two points of view are incompatible only if we assume there is one simple relationship between crime and deprivation. He believes a more complicated relationship is at work, as shown by the graph.

Crime and deprivation

Start at the top right-hand corner, where levels of deprivation and criminality are both high. As we move to the left on the horizontal axis, the level of deprivation falls and so, gradually, does the proportion of the population who are criminals. Suddenly, at point H, a marginal decrease in the extent of deprivation leads to a sharp fall in criminality.

However, if we start from the bottom left-hand corner of the chart — low criminality and low levels of poverty — even quite marked increases in deprivation have only a limited impact on the propensity to commit crimes.

Ormerod says that what really happens is that the behaviour of individuals is strongly influenced by the behaviour of everybody else around them. So, if a housing estate is crammed full of people with a propensity to commit crimes, a decrease in deprivation will have only a limited effect on lawlessness. Similarly, a neighbouring estate may have similar levels of economic deprivation but a far smaller proportion of people with a tendency to crime.

Ormerod says the same duality can apply to the economy. "The same values for variables which might be thought to cause inflation can be associated in different historical contexts with quite different values for the rate of inflation — in exactly the same way that different crime rates can be associated with an identical set of factors such as social and economic conditions and the nature of the criminal justice system."

The book concludes that governments should stop trying to micro-manage the economy and concentrate instead on getting the big picture right. The Marshall Plan, for example, is cited as an example of policy-makers laying the foundations for European recovery.

Increasingly, and sadly, economics has become more and more dominated by micro-solutions. One study quoted in Middleton's book lamented that "departments of economics are graduating a generation of idiots savants, brilliant at esoteric mathematics yet innocent of actual economic life". Alfred Marshall had a better idea: use the maths, then burn it.

* Charlatans or Saviours? by Roger Middleton (Edward Elgar, £65); Butterfly Economics by Paul Ormerod (Faber, £16.99)

○ YUGOSLAVIA CONDEMNED TO A LINGERING DEATH – Page 4

LE MONDE diplomatique
The Guardian Weekly
November 1998

Collapse of the Russian state

BY MOSHE LEWIN

BESPREDEL: that's how Russian intellectuals describe the situation in their country. The word defies precise translation. It denotes hopelessness, rampant cynicism and antisocial behaviour at all levels, all at the same time. It also implies an absence of limits, a situation in which anything goes. At bottom, one Russian writer suggests, it's a sense of "I'm all right, Jack".

The constant use of the word points to the deep distress felt throughout Russia and the enormous effort — and suffering — needed to surmount it. The word's numerous connotations also remind us that crises have multiple causes and that, for the historian, their theoretical analysis is far more difficult than understanding and describing periods of progress. Yet it is clear that the present situation needs to be seen in historical perspective. Analysing it as a "classic" Russian crisis makes the situation more intelligible, if not less desperate.

It is an apparent paradox, though quite logical, that the preponderant role of the state has made Russia particularly vulnerable. This has been the case throughout its history, but particularly in the 20th century with the crises of 1903-07, 1916-21 and the 1990s. This last — the culmination of a long period of less spectacular but fatal decline — has parallels with the two earlier crises, though in a different form.

The key to understanding these crises is the interaction of historically conflicting social and political strata responding in different ways to strong pressure from dynamic developments inside or outside the country that upset an already shaky internal equilibrium. Rapid economic development, galloping industrialisation, war and the inevitable arms race, a technological revolution that puts severe strain on archaic or ageing social and political structures resistant to change, are not unique to Russia. They are the universal ingredients of the history of the 20th century. But the course they have taken has differed from country to country according to circumstances.

The 1903-07 crisis in Russia was preceded by a long period of decline similar to the 1970s. As imbalances and tensions mounted, they were aggravated by a determined onslaught on earlier reforms. Tsar Alexander III had disapproved of his father's private behaviour and liberal inclinations. He reacted to his "frivolous" conduct of affairs by imposing a heavy-handed authoritarianism just when the opposite was needed. This compounded the difficulties of a regime confronted, particularly during the 1890s, with the brutal incursions of capitalism. Its dynamism put severe strain on rural society and the autocratic state — the two virtually immobile pillars of Tsarist Russia.

The rural complex had three main components: the peasantry, the landed nobility and the monarchy (which owned an enormous amount of land). This time-honoured power structure was now obsolete and unresponsive to the needs of the mainly urban strata of entrepreneurs, liberal professions and industrial workers which, if not large large in numbers, were growing rapidly.

All the components of this rural "trio" were, to differing degrees, in the throes of change that was breaking up the old order. Some were in

Moshe Lewin is the author of "The making of the Soviet system: essays in the social history of inter-war Russia", Methuen, London, 1985

Continued on page 10

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Politics of hunger

BY IGNACIO RAMONET

NOW here's a statistic you might have missed. The joint wealth of the world's three richest individuals is greater than the combined gross domestic product (1) of the 48 poorest countries — a quarter of all the world's states.

Everybody knows that inequality has increased over the past 20 years of unfettered ultra-liberalism. But who could have imagined the gap had widened so far? In 1960 the income of the 20% of the world's population living in the richest countries was 30 times greater than that of the 20% in the poorest countries. Now we learn that in 1995 it was 82 times greater (2). In more than 70 countries, per capita income is lower today than it was 20 years ago. Almost 3 billion people — half the world's population — live on less than two dollars a day.

While goods are more abundant than ever before, the number of people without shelter, work or enough to eat is constantly growing. Of the 4.5 billion people living in developing countries, almost a third have no drinking water. A fifth of all children receive an insufficient intake of calories or protein. And 2 billion people — a third of the human race — suffer from anaemia.

Is this the way it has to be? The answer is no. The United Nations calculates that the world population's basic needs for food, drinking water, education and medical care could be covered by a levy of less than 4% on the accumulated wealth of the 225 largest fortunes.

To satisfy all the world's sanitation and food requirements would cost only $13 billion, hardly as much as the people of the United States and the European Union spend each year on perfume.

Next month will see the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services". But for most of humanity, these rights are increasingly inaccessible.

Consider, for example, the right to food. Food is not in short supply. In fact, food products have never been so abundant. There is enough available to provide each of the Earth's inhabitants with at least 2,700 calories a day. But production alone is not enough. The people who need the food must be able to buy it and consume it. And that is precisely the problem. Thirty million people a year die of hunger. And 800 million suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Again, there is nothing inevitable about this. Climatic problems are often predictable. When humanitarian organisations such as Action Against Hunger (3) are able to intervene, they can often nip a famine in the bud in a matter of weeks. And yet hunger continues to decimate whole populations.

Why? Because hunger has become a political weapon. In today's world, no famine is gratuitous. Hunger is a strategy pursued with unbelievable cynicism by governments and military regimes whom the end of the cold war has deprived of a steady income. Rather than starving the enemy, as Sylvie Brunel points out (4), they are starving their own populations in order to cash in on media coverage and international compassion, an inexhaustible source of money, food and political platforms.

In Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, North Korea, Burma and Afghanistan, governments and military leaders are holding innocent people hostage and starving them for political ends, sometimes with appalling cruelty. In Sierra Leone, the men of ex-Corporal Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF), have been systematically chopping off peasants' hands with machetes to prevent them cultivating the land in a horrific year-long campaign of terror. Climate has become a marginal factor in major famines. It is man who is starving man.

Amartya Sen, the winner of this year's Nobel prize for economics, is renowned for showing how government policies can cause famine even when food is abundant. On several occasions, he has stressed "the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press" (5).

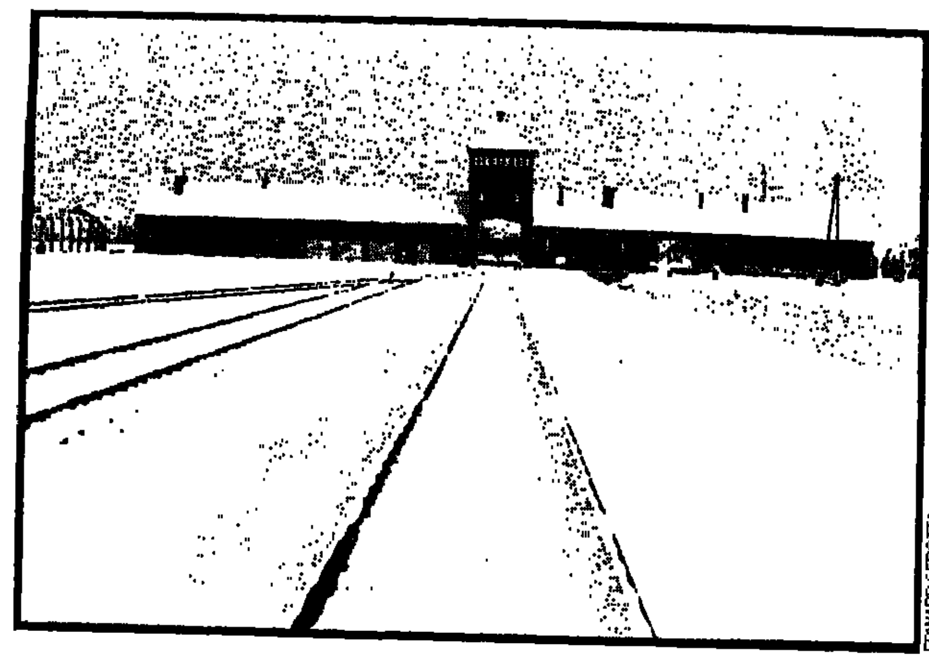
Rejecting the arguments of the neo-liberals, Professor Sen contends that greater responsibility for the well-being of society must be given, not to the market, but to the state. A state that must be sensitive to the needs of its citizens and, at the same time, concerned with human development throughout the world.

Translated by Barry Smerin

(1) GDP measures the overall national production of goods and services.
(2) *Human Development Report 1998*, United Nations Development Programme, New York, September 1998. See also Dominique Vidal, "Dans le Sud, développement ou régression?", *Le Monde diplomatique*, October 1998.
(3) UK office: 1, Catton Street, London WC1R 4AB, email aahuk@gn.apc.org; US office: 875 avenue of the Americas, Suite 1905, New York NY 10001, e-mail: jfvidal@aah.usa.org
(4) See Sylvie Brunel and Jean-Luc Bodin, *Géopolitique de la faim. Quand la faim est une arme* . . . (annual report by Action Against Hunger), PUF, Paris, 1998, 310 p., 125 F, soon to be available in English as "The Hunger Report".
(5) See "Human Rights and Asian Values: What Lee Kuan Yew and Le Peng don't understand about Asia", *The New Republic*, 14 July, 1997.

HOLOCAUST BOOK SPARKS CONTROVERSY IN FRANCE

From Mein Kampf to Auschwitz


EDWARD SERROTTA

The debate among historians of the Holocaust has become increasingly heated, following Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's attempts to silence critics of his best-seller, Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ultimately at stake is the interpretation of the Jewish genocide, with all its implications.

BY DOMINIQUE VIDAL

THE pressure brought to bear on Ruth Bettina Birn and Norman Finkelstein throughout this year has been described by Israeli journalist Tom Segev as "bordering on cultural terrorism" (1). Their crime? A book entitled *A Nation On Trial* (2). While highly recommended by such authoritative historians of Nazism as Raul Hilberg, Ian Kershaw, Arno Mayer and Christopher Browning (3), it contains strong criticism of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (4).

Helped by heavy media promotion, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* has sold more than half a million copies in over a dozen countries since it was published two years ago. Its explanation of genocide is that the Nazi regime gave free rein to the "eliminationist anti-Semitism" of "ordinary Germans". This simplistic thesis has proved highly popular with the public but has hardly convinced the specialists. The foremost Israeli expert, Yehuda Bauer, who is director of Yad Vashem's research institute in Jerusalem, is quite categorical: "Goldhagen's book has been praised by journalists and public figures, but I have yet to read of a single historian who has publicly expressed agreement. Not one, and that is very rare unanimity. In my university, this book would never have passed as a PhD dissertation." (5)

For the young Harvard academic, the straw that broke the camel's back was an article in the March 1997 issue of the *Historical Journal* published by Cambridge University Press. Its author, Ruth Bettina Birn, is chief historian of the war crimes division of Canada's Department of Justice. She is thus very familiar with the archives kept at Ludwigsburg by the agency which the last West German government set up to investigate Nazi crimes. It was she who drew Goldhagen's attention to three files that provided the material for his thesis. They concern the behaviour of certain police battalions during the massacres in the East, of labour camp guards, and of those who guarded the "death marches". In all three cases, Birn accuses Goldhagen of extrapolating from a small number of testimonies and of manipulating descriptions of atrocities to portray the agents of genocide as representative of the vast majority of Germans.

Goldhagen's response was to threaten his impertinent critic with a libel action. Birn was outraged. She immediately announced the publication of a revised article along with a solidly argued piece by Finkelstein, a professor of political science and the son of concentration camp survivors, who is a longstanding supporter of the Palestinian cause (6). Faced with what Goldhagen described as an "anti-Zionist crusade", the pro-Israel lobby went on the offensive. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, asserted that "the issue is not whether Goldhagen's thesis is right or wrong, but what is legitimate criticism and what goes beyond the pale" (7). The Canadian Jewish Congress even complained to the ministry of justice in the ultimately vain hope of getting it to take action against Birn.

While Goldhagen is clearly right to stress the role played in the lead-up to genocide by widespread German anti-Semitism, he is just as clearly wrong to equate the one with the other. Especially as his analysis of anti-Semitism in Germany is sketchy, to say the least. Certainly, the assimilation of the Jews in Germany aroused virulent nationalist opposition. But the anti-Jewish nationalists were not particularly successful at the polls, unlike the labour movement, which supported Jewish assimilation.

As Hilberg points out, the German intellectual élite had always shown little taste for "propaganda" or "disorder", and the term "anti-Semitic" acquired a negative connotation at certain times for that very reason.

Goldhagen shows similar lack of perspective in relation to the 1930s. He stresses that in 1932 more than 37% of the German electorate voted for the Nazis, but finds nothing significant in the fact that nearly 63% failed to do so. Nor does he mention that as late as 5 March 1933, in the midst of reprisals for the burning of the Reichstag, the communist and social democratic left, which was of course opposed to anti-Semitism, won almost a third of the poll.

Goldhagen also overestimates the anti-Semitic significance of the Nazi vote. Most historians have noted that Hitler gradually soft-pedalled his hatred for the Jews, which he considered less appealing to voters than anti-communism. In short, to quote Saul Friedlander, "Although traditional religious and social anti-Semitism was widespread in Germany, in my opinion, hatred of Jews did not constitute a primary factor capable of explaining the Nazi rise to power or the participation of ordinary Germans in the mass murders of the Final Solution" (8). Moreover, if the whole country was so eager to exterminate the Jews, why was the genocide perpetrated outside Germany and in the greatest secrecy? And by what miracle did this age-old anti-Jewish culture suddenly disappear in post-war Germany, as Goldhagen claims?

Concentrating solely on anti-Semitism involves a second major error. It is true that Adolf Eichmann was condemned to death in Jerusalem in 1962 for "crimes against the Jewish people", rather than "crimes against humanity" (9). Nevertheless, 250,000 Gypsies (out of 700,000) died in a genocide of the same type. More than 3 million Soviet prisoners of war were shot, starved to death or, in some cases, gassed. Poland lost hundreds of thousands of its leaders and intellectuals. And what of the mentally ill?

By the time it was halted on 24 August, 1941, following protests from Church leaders, the euthanasia programme initiated by the Reich chancellory in October 1939 had led to the murder of more than a quarter of the country's 360,000 registered insane, 70,000 of whom were killed in gassing vans. Those who had devised the killing machines went on to develop the gas chambers used in the extermination camps.

Consideration of the other victims of Nazi terror (10) suggests that genocidal anti-Semitism was part of a vast plan of conquest, colonisation and aryanisation of the *Lebensraum* which the Reich was seeking in the East. Hence the inevitable confrontation with the "Judaeo-Bolsheviks" in power in Russia. On studying Hitler's anti-Semitic diatribes, numerous historians — apart from Goldhagen — have been struck by the fact that hatred of Jews is almost always coupled with hatred of communism.

Finally, to isolate German anti-Semitism is to disregard the combination of other factors that largely explains the success of the Nazi enterprise. As he subsequently admitted, Goldhagen deals only fleetingly with the slaughter of 1914-18, the national humiliation at Versailles, the effects of the economic crisis, the fragility of the young Weimar Republic, the lack of an alternative due to suicidal divisions among the parties of the left, and so on. Nor does he find any significance in the class alliance, headed by the employers, that was built up around Hitler because he was seen as the only bulwark against Bolshevism. Kershaw, by contrast, argues that the huge profits made by big business were certainly no accidental side-effect of Nazism.

Again, how can we ignore the effects of the extraordinary totalitarian bureaucratic machine which Hitler's henchmen installed as soon as he became chancellor? The combination of all-pervasive propaganda and ruthless repression led to the detention of 150,000 communists and social democrats in concentration camps from 1933 to 1939 (11). And how can we underestimate the effects of the war itself, from the nationalistic exultation of the initial victories to the humiliation of the subsequent defeats and Allied bombing?

Few historians still see a straight line leading from *Mein Kampf* to Auschwitz. True, once in power the Nazis lost no time in attacking the Jews. But until the outbreak of war, the stated objective was the expulsion of Jews to any countries that would have them. This included emigration to Palestine, which was the subject of an agreement with the Jewish Agency in August 1933 (12).

Operation "Barbarossa", launched on 22 June 1941, was the great turning point. The "Rules of Conduct for Soldiers in Russia", quoted by Mayer, required German troops to attack Bolshevik agitators, snipers, saboteurs and Jews "energetically and mercilessly" and to strive unremittingly to eliminate all active and passive resistance. With this official cover, the Wehrmacht and, above all, the 3,000 killers of the *Einsatzgrüppen*, assisted by their local accomplices, committed increasingly horrific mass murders of civilians. It was the radicalisation of those massacres, and their extension to the whole of European Jewry, which, in the opinion of most historians, led to genocide in the pr[oper] meaning of the word (13). An outstanding his[torical] issue is the actual date of the deci[sion] and whether it was a written order or[,] [as] Christopher Browning argues, simply "a [nod] of the head" from the Führer.

Mayer argues that the era of old-st[yle] pogroms had passed and Nazi Germany [had] chosen to take the Jews as hostages in its [des]perate struggle to make them the "privi[leged] martyrs" of its ferocious crusade aga[inst] Bolshevism, adding that the choice was [ir]revocable. In mid-March 1942, 75% to [80%] of the victims of the Shoah were still alive[. A] year later, the proportions were reversed.

The destruction of European Jewry [was] unique in human history. "Its uniqueness," writes Eberhard Jackel, "lies in the fact [that] never before had a state proclaimed, under [the] authority of its highest leader, that a spec[ific] group of human beings was to be exterm[inat]ed . . . a decision which the state in ques[tion] carried out with all means at its disposal." While a paradigm for genocide, it is nevert[he]less a link in a long chain of savagery [that] includes the massacre of Indians in Ame[rica], Armenians in Turkey and, more recent[ly], Tutsis in Rwanda. Kershaw was right to st[ress] that if we are to learn a lesson from the ge[no]cide of the Jews, it is vital to accept — wh[ile] acknowledging the uniqueness of the h[olo]caust as an event without precedent — t[hat] our world has not reached the stage where [it is] immune from similar atrocities involving pe[o]ples other than the Germans and the Jews. [It] was, he wrote, no longer a matter of "expl[ain]ing" the holocaust by reference to Jewish [his]tory or to relations between Jews a[nd] Germans, but of endeavouring to underst[and] the pathology of modern states and the ma[laise] of "civilisation" itself.

The powerful formulation of the Fre[nch] philosopher Paul Ricoeur gets right to t[he] heart of the matter: the victims of Ausch[witz] were, *par excellence*, "delegates to our mem[o]ry of all the victims of history" (15).

Translated by Barry Smer[in]

(1) *Haaretz*, Tel Aviv, 15 May 1998.
(2) Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, *A Na[tion on] Trial: the Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, He[nry] Holt & Co., New York, 1998.
(3) Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations from th[ese] authors are taken from the following books: Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Quadrangle Bo[oks], Chicago, 1961); Kershaw, *The Nazi dictatorship: pro[blems] and perspectives of interpretation* (E. Arnold, London – New York, 1989); Mayer, *Why did the heavens not [dark]en?: the "final solution in history"* (Pantheon Books, N[ew] York, 1988); Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve P[olice] Battalion 101 and the final solution in Poland* (A[aron] Asher Books, New York, 1992).
(4) Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executi[oners:] Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Knopf, New Yo[rk,] 1996. In general, the term "genocide" is to be preferred [to] "holocaust", which denotes a sacrificial burnt offering.
(5) Quoted in *Outlook*, Santa Monica, Vol. 36, No. [..] April 1998.
(6) He is the author of *Image and Reality of the Isr[ael-]Palestine Conflict*, Verso, London and New York, 1995.
(7) Quoted in *The New York Times*, 10 January 1998.
(8) *Haaretz*, 5 December 1997. Friedlander is the author [of] *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. I The Years [of] Persecution 1933-1939*, Harper Collins, New York, 19[97]. Vol. 2 has just been published.
(9) See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a re[port] on the banality of evil*, Faber & Faber, London, 1963.
(10) See Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La concurrence des [vic]times : génocide, identité, reconnaissance*, La Découv[erte,] Paris, 1997.
(11) See Martin Broszat, "The Third Reich and the Germ[an] People," in *The Challenge of the Third Reich: the Adam [von] Trott memorial lectures*, edited by Hedley Bull, Claren[don] Press, New York, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 198[6].
(12) See Yehuda Bauer, *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish neg[oti]ations, 1933-1945*, Yale University Press, New Hav[en,] 1994. From 1933 to 1939, 52,000 German Jews were [thus] enabled to emigrate to Palestine with part of their saving[s.] The total amount of 140 million reichmarks made up 1[..] of all private capital imported to Palestine.
(13) See Philippe Burrin, "L'autre face du génocide", *Le Monde diplomatique*, December 1995, and "Le génocide des juifs en débats", also available in English "Debating the Holocaust", *Ibid*, June 1997. See also his book *Hitler and the Jews: the genesis of the Holocaust*, Edward Arnold, London, New York, 1994.
(14) *Die Zeit*, Hamburg, 3 October 1986.
(15) Paul Ricoeur, *Time and narrative*, Vol. 3, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

CRONY CAPITALISM IN THE WEST

The banking system in turmoil

The Japanese government's October announcement that it intended to spend $500 billion on bank nationalisation was enough to send the Nikkei index soaring to one of its highest levels this year. This is a genuine emergency. Serious reverses suffered by some hedge funds are threatening the banks that rashly lent them the wherewithal to try their luck in the great money-go-round. And the taxpayer, who had no part in the winnings, is now welcome to help bail out the losers.

BY IBRAHIM WARDE

THE SUMMER of 1998 looked like being a happy time for most of the big international financial institutions. For months their profits had been increasing, despite some losses on the Asian markets, and their stock exchange prices kept rising. Nothing, it seemed, could stop the upward trend, which they attributed to judicious strategies.

The main French banks, for example, were congratulating themselves on a thoroughly successful turnaround. After a long, slow recovery from the slump in the property market, they seemed to be well placed in the race for profits — the ratio of profits to company capital now being the financial institutions' chief measure of success. And since there is not much money to be made from the time-honoured practice of channelling public savings into loans to business undertakings and private individuals (1), they turned to new and far more lucrative activities. The watchwords of the new strategy were globalisation (with special attention to the "emerging markets"), trading (on their own account or for clients), and innovation (creating new products by a process of "financial engineering").

The model for this new strategy comes from the United States. The Bankers Trust led the way, closing down most of its network, deserting its old clients and abandoning conventional credit for a new life as a "risk manager" (2). It now specialised in derivatives — financial instruments such as futures, options or swaps, whose value is "derived" from the assets (real or financial) underpinning them.

The great attraction of this new direction lay in the boundless potential for creating new products and, above all, in the profit margins generated by those products (3). Derivatives can be simple, "hybrid" (combining different financial operations and different levels of risk in a single product), or frankly "exotic" (complicated to the point of being incomprehensible). The newer and more complex the product, the higher the returns.

The sales pitch for these products goes: "Fund managers eliminate risk, investors increase their returns, and borrowers reduce the cost of taking out a loan." The risks involved barely rate a mention.

The most ardent and influential exponent of these new ideas is undoubtedly the Group of 30, otherwise known as the Consultative Group on International Economic and Monetary Affairs, a kind of private think-tank based in New York and funded by the major players in international finance. The names of the 30 hand-picked members read like a Who's Who in public and private finance. Headed by the Paul A Volcker, former head of the US Federal Reserve, they consist of central bank governors, including Jean-Claude Trichet, governor of the Banque de France, Jacob A Frenkel, governor of the Bank of Israel, and Andrew D Crockett, general manager of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the "central banks' central bank"; heads of financial institutions such as Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch and the Dresdner Bank; and well-known economists such as Professor Peter B Kenen of Princeton University and Professor Paul Krugman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The publications and symposiums organised by the Group of 30 have produced a body of dogma, instantly taken up and repeated *urbi et orbi* in the financial press and by "market economists" and financial analysts. The message, more or less unchallenged, is that we must "modernise" finance, encourage innovation, "harmonise" international regulation, ensure free movement of capital and open markets, and, above all, trust in the markets' ability to regulate themselves, notably in the area of hedge funds and derivatives (4).

This was the guiding spirit behind three important developments in international financial regulation in the past two years. In December 1997, under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), 102 countries signed the Protocol on Trade in Financial Services, which is due to enter into force in March 1999. Also in 1997, the Basle Committee on Banking Supervision (representing the central banks of the leading industrial countries under the chairmanship of William J. McDonough, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and acting in co-ordination with the BIS) issued 25 Core Principles of Banking Supervision. In theory, they were to apply throughout the world from October 1998.

This committee, which produced the Cooke ratios (5), had now reviewed — and relaxed — its criteria. The great financial institutions would be subject to less regulation and would have a greater measure of flexibility in managing their risks, provided that they had "appropriate models" (6).

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Banking principles

BUT IT was those very risk management models that were to prove disastrously inappropriate, to the point of calling into question ideas that had enjoyed almost universal support. Economist Henry Kaufman, once an influential voice on Wall Street but now considered rather vieux jeu, lists four principles that bankers have trouble understanding: first, heightened competition leads to rash decisions because competitive pressures are so intense that banks do not insist on due diligence; second, the real world is too complex to be reduced to a few economic variables; third, the infatuation with mathematics and quantification is dangerous because models based on those criteria assume that the past is bound to repeat itself; and, last, euphoria creates the illusion of boundless liquidity (7).

These errors probably account for the huge losses banks and brokers have suffered on stock exchanges round the world. Many young traders started up after the 1987 crash and have only operated in bull markets. They are devoted adherents of "leverage": the bigger the debt, the more chance of making a killing. Thus, if you put in 10 and borrow 90, a 10% profit will double your stake. The equations, the models and the sales patter of the "experts" also create the illusion, indeed the assurance, of risk-free speculation.

Following a series of warnings and falling rates, the risk assessment agency Moody's is now pointing out that the new market risk management models have fostered a false sense of security in some banks, leading them to invest heavily in high-risk markets. The agency adds that, however powerful such models may be, they do not perform well in markets where liquidity is a problem, and they are no substitute for due caution and independent judgment on the part of bankers.

Since mid-July, the mood of the markets has changed. What at first looked like a slight correction has turned out to be a real crash. Investors were particular shocked by developments in Russia during August, the collapse of the rouble, and the government's decision to halt repayments on its debt. Wasn't Russia the 1997 world champion among emerging markets? The very markets that should have been the first to benefit from globalisation suddenly went down like a row of dominoes (8). In many countries, the floating capital vanished as quickly as it had come, leaving a trail of burst bubbles in its wake. First Russia, now Brazil is on the edge of the financial abyss and may well drag Argentina, Chile and Mexico down with it (9).

The rescue of the hedge fund, Long Term Capital Management (LTCM), points up just one more item in a catalogue of disasters. The high-risk bonds that investors had been so desperately keen to buy a few weeks before suddenly found no takers. Many institutions that had put money into them now lacked the necessary funds to stay afloat. The turmoil was general. Except for Africa, which had never found favour with investors, no part of the world was spared, and only the most conservative financial institutions escaped, those that were inclined by nature — or in rare cases chose — to distrust global finance (10).

Europe's largest bank, the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), has reported losses of 950 million Swiss francs ($680 million) following the troubles at LTCM. The chairman of its board of directors, Martin Cabiallavetta, announced that he is resigning "to help restore confidence in the bank" (11). Merrill Lynch reports that it has $2 billion in hedge funds, including $1.4 billion in LTCM, and that it plans to cut 3,400 jobs, ie, 5% of its staff. Citigroup and Bank of America profits have been slashed by half. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), established in 1991 to help the countries of Eastern Europe in their transition to a market economy, has announced its first losses.

The disaster scenario of "systemic risk" — a chain-reaction of linked failures that would shatter confidence in the entire banking system — can no longer be ruled out. And the financial crisis is threatening to spread to the real economy through a credit crunch that would stifle businesses and householders alike.

As John Maynard Keynes said long ago, "Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation" (12).

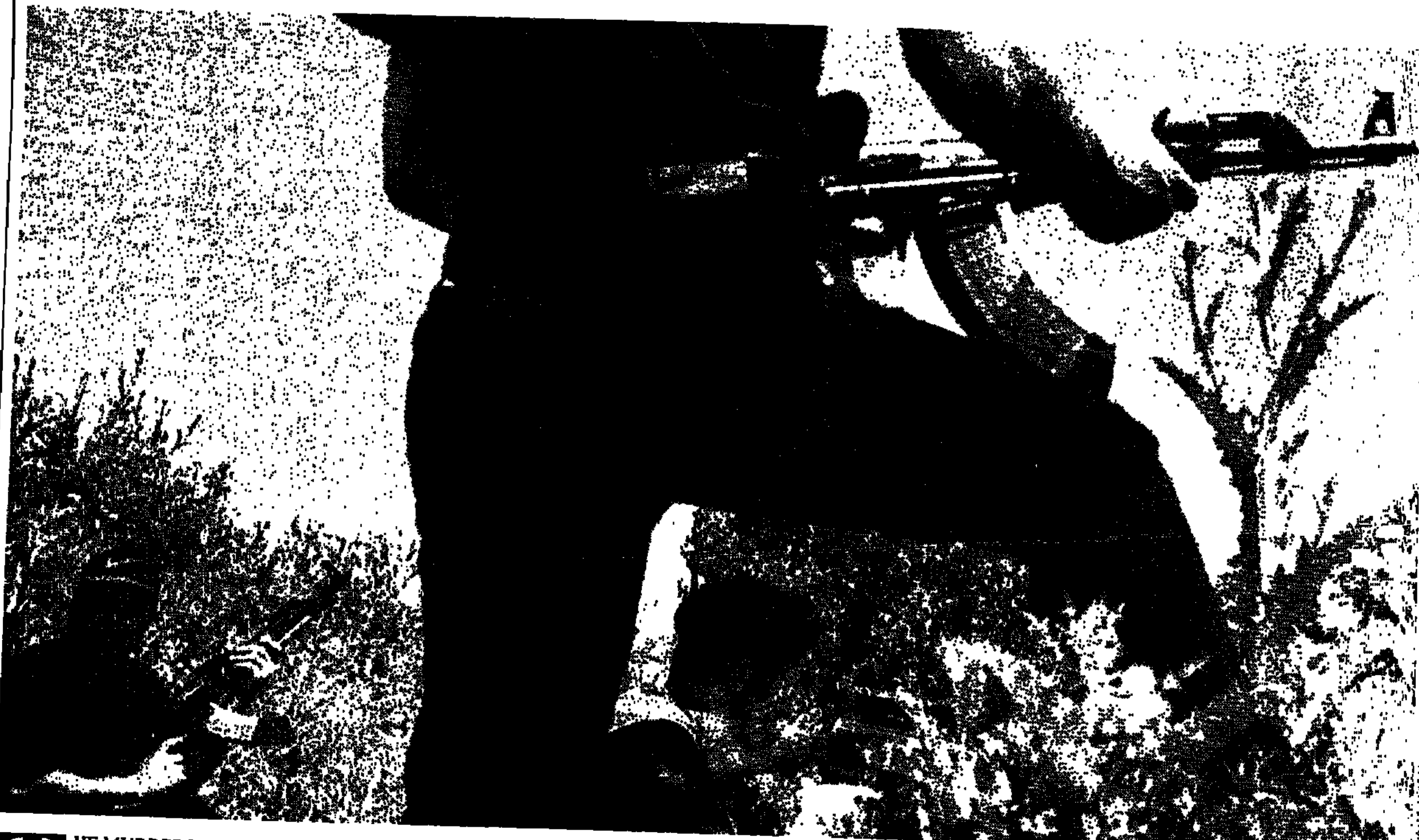
So one can understand the Federal Reserve's eagerness to refloat the hedge fund LTCM and its willingness to cut interest rates twice, on 29 September and 15 October, to boost the markets (13).

Translated by Barbara Wilson

(1) For example, during a tour of Asia Jacques Chirac spoke with regret of the French banking system's "inability to shoulder its responsibilities to the business community". *L'Express*, 3 July 1996
(2) Martin Mayer, *The Bankers: The Next Generation*, Dutton, New York, 1997, pp.28-29.
(3) Ibrahim Warde, "La dérive des nouveaux produits financiers", *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 1994
(4) http://www.group30.org/
(5) These solvency ratios require international banks, for example, to have capital equivalent to at least 8% of their credits
(6) Ibrahim Warde, *The Regulation of Foreign Banking in the United States*, IBPC, San Francisco, 1998.
(7) Henry Kaufman, "What Bankers Don't Know", *US News and World Report*, 12 October 1998.
(8) Peter Marber, *From Third World to World Class: The Future of Emerging Markets in the Global Economy*, Perseus Books, Reading (Massachusetts), 1998
(9) See François Chesnais, "Will the world catch Asian flu?", and Serge Halimi, "Liberal Dogma shipwrecked", *Le Monde diplomatique* in *The Guardian Weekly*, September and October 1998 respectively.
(10) Thus, in France, only the mutual insurance companies emerged unscathed (see *Le Nouvel Economiste*, 2 October 1998).
(11) Transactions in derivatives in London had already cost the bank $450 million (2.5 billion French francs) in 1997.
(12) Quoted by John Kenneth Galbraith, *A Short History of Financial Euphoria*, Penguin, New York, 1990.
(13) The official pretext for the cut in interest rates on 15 October was that inflation was now under control. But figures published on the very same day recorded the highest rise of the year in the monthly inflation rate.

NO SOLUTION IN SIGHT FOR BALKANS CRISIS

The dismantling of Yugoslavia



Belgrade's takeover of Kosovo nine years ago was the first blow to the system of constitutional balances inherited from the Tito era and marked the rise to power of Slobodan Milosevic. It preceded the constitutional change to the status of Serbs in the Croatian Republic after the election of Franjo Tudjman in 1990 and the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, which was followed by the wars of ethnic cleansing

BY CATHERINE SAMARY

THE MURDEROUS onslaught of the Serbian militia in Kosovo, which was intended to "eradicate" the drive towards independence in the province, may have opened a new chapter in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The threats of Nato intervention and the agreements reached with Slobodan Milosevic — which run counter to the Kosovo Albanians' demands for self-determination — have by no means closed this chapter and stabilised the area. The president of Yugoslavia in the nation's third incarnation (1) (as a federation of Serbia and Montenegro) has committed himself to de-escalation under the supervision of observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, against a background of considerable political uncertainty. His opponents have won power in Montenegro, and he is forced to contend with the presence in the enlarged Serbian government of the proto-fascist Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj.

The Serbs have begun to withdraw their paramilitary forces. And, with winter fast approaching, the Albanian people seem to have returned to their villages en masse. But their security is not guaranteed, nor is it certain that their homes will be rebuilt in the near future. Most important of all, there is no guarantee that negotiations on the status of Kosovo will be held and brought to a successful conclusion. The promised autonomy (within Serbia) is precisely what the Kosovo Albanians have been boycotting for almost 10 years by means of peaceful but determined resistance. The Kosovo Liberation Army (known by its Albanian initials as the UCK) has already announced that it will not give up the fight for independence — which could mean protracted guerrilla warfare. Unless all the communities in the province are given equal rights, this new theatre of war in the Balkans could flare up again, which would have an explosive effect on the fragile republic of Macedonia (where the Albanians, who make up 25% to 40% of the population, are demanding recognition as a national community). It could also upset the precarious balance in Bosnia-Herzegovina and accelerate the disintegration of the present Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from which Montenegro is increasingly seeking to detach itself.

The Yugoslav jigsaw puzzle is coming apart piece by piece, and there is no end in sight. In this protracted process of decomposition, the "international community", instead of putting the fire out, has actually been fanning the flames. New states that declared their independence were recognised, under pressure from Germany, without sufficient negotiation and, above all, without any attempt to deal systematically with the national issues involved. This failed to prevent the outbreak and spread of war in the region. While Nato intervention and the 1995 Dayton accords led to a ceasefire in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they also set the seal on the ethnic cleansing that had already taken place. And the governments now in power have every reason to prevent the hundreds of refugees from returning to their homes.

Former Yugoslavia has disappeared, leaving in its place a patchwork of fragments. The spiralling disintegration can be viewed in two ways. In the early stages of the crisis, in 1990-93, the favourite theory in Belgrade was that, of a conspiracy between Germany and the Vatican. It is public knowledge that the secession of Slovenia and Croatia was strongly encouraged in those quarters, but this does not explain why people voted for independence in the referendums held in both republics. The conspiracy theory explains nothing — neither the economic, moral and political crisis of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was patently obvious throughout the 1980s and paralysed the federal institutions, nor the specific conflict in Kosovo, which runs through the whole of Yugoslav history.

The opposite approach recognises only causes within the former system. On this view the "international community" can be criticised only for intervening too little and too late, and the Yugoslav crisis is explained by factors foreign to "civilised" Europe. The theory of inter-ethnic hatred — of tribes tearing each other apart for centuries — is one variant of this approach, in which all the protagonists are equally to blame. The other variant puts the whole blame for the crisis and the war on the "Serbo-communist aggressor".

In both cases, the communist regime is seen as having, at best, kept the lid on nationalist aspirations; at worst, as having fostered nationalism and ended up feeding off it. The Tito regime is supposed to have "forced" the peoples of Yugoslavia to live together. According to this line of thinking, the crisis of the socialist system and the achievement of political pluralism simply induced the bureaucrats of the former single party (now split up among the various republics) to exchange their "communist self-management" clothing for nationalist attire. When the suppressed hatreds rose to the surface, the whole system fell to pieces. This interpretation appears to have the merit of consistency. But simplified (not to say simplistic) views of the past shed little light on present difficulties.

Both during the second world war and in the present period, inter-ethnic violence was rooted in policies aimed at building ethnically exclusive nation states on the ruins of the first and second Yugoslavia. How are we to explain the failure of these policies in the first instance and their resurgence and victory in the second?

A first obvious difference is that of context. The fascist or collaborationist regimes in power in the states that resulted from the break-up of the first Yugoslavia underwent occupation by the Axis powers — Nazi Germany and Benito Mussolini's Italy. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) seized on this unifying factor by organising a national liberation struggle throughout Yugoslavia. In the 1990s there was no common external enemy. Germany was attractive in Slovenia and Croatia but seen as a hereditary enemy in Serbia. Nor, with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, was there any longer a risk of Soviet intervention.

But the cohesion brought about by the struggle against an external enemy is not sufficient to explain why, in 1945, nationalist policies were defeated and a second Yugoslavia was established, whereas in 1990-91, the Yugoslav project backed by Ante Markovic, a Croatian liberal and head of the last federal government, was rejected at the polls in the constituent republics.

Clearly, the elections that brought the CPY to power after the second world war were not genuinely pluralistic. They were boycotted by opposition candidates who feared they were rigged. But it is hard to imagine how, after the terrible fratricidal clashes of the war, the CPY could have imposed the establishment of a second Yugoslavia against the majority will of the peoples concerned, given the collapse of the first Yugoslavia, which had been dubbed a "prison of the peoples". The idea is all the more absurd as the Communist Party itself, torn by factional struggles and banned since the early 1920s, had fewer than 10,000 mem-

Continued on page 5

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Continued from page 4

bers before the war. Neither the CPY's summary executions of real or alleged collaborators immediately after the war, nor the rapid imposition of single-party rule, alter the fact of the regime's initial and lasting popularity.

In practice, the joint multinational struggle against fascism was organised with a view to the creation of a Balkan federation that would, as Tito had promised, include Albania. The establishment of the republics and the distribution of land to the peasants in the liberated areas laid the basis for a — by no means artificial — rapprochement between the peoples of the region. The introduction of workers' self-management after the break with Stalin in 1948 strengthened support for the regime in the factories and among the intelligentsia. The decollectivisation of agriculture in 1953, after a period of forced collectivisation under Stalinist pressure, helped to win over the peasantry.

Without an awareness of the progress achieved, both in the social and economic domain and in terms of the recognition of multiple national identities, it is impossible to understand several decades of history that made many people proud to be "Yugoslav" citizens, while retaining their national identity (2). The economy grew rapidly up to the end of the 1970s, enabling a country on the fringe of the capitalist world, and still 80% agricultural on the eve of the second world war, to escape from underdevelopment.

True, the whole edifice was both recent and fragile. In the absence of democracy, "official truth" stifled discussion of the darker episodes of recent history. The one-party system, and the lack of transparency and of consistency in economic decision-making, encouraged the growth of a decentralised bureaucracy that often diverted investment funds for its own purposes. (This was certainly the case in Kosovo.) The repression of social and national tensions led to an economic free-for-all. The increasing decentralisation of the economy, without democratic checks and balances, and its opening up to the world market, cost the country dear in the 1980s. While all regions underwent development, wide gaps in per capita income opened up between the different republics, whose population patterns and production structures varied considerably. This was the regime's most important failure.

In this situation, the sudden increase in foreign debt brought about by the jump in oil prices and the subsequent rise in interest rates in the early 1980s spelt the death of the system. In 1980 foreign debt reached $20 billion, marking the beginning of a decade of crisis and conflict during which thousands of strikes broke out. The federal authorities were unable to force the republics, or the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, to shoulder their fair share of the debt. The richer regions considered themselves penalised by inefficient bureaucratic management designed to redistribute resources to less developed areas. The poorer regions complained that the rich regions were able to export large quantities of goods — and hence earn large amounts of foreign currency — because they, the poorer regions, were supplying them with cheap raw materials.

In short, although the causes of the crisis had little to do with inter-ethnic hatred, the crisis itself encouraged the rise of nationalist feeling. But Titoism had been more than an interlude. It had consolidated certain nationalities and protected them against the historically dominant nations that had been the only ones recognised in the inter-war period (3). This protection was extended to the Kosovo Albanians from the 1960s onwards, although they had previously suffered a major blow when Belgrade had dropped the idea of a Balkan confederation after the break with Stalin. The abandonment of that project had again severed Kosovo's links with Albania, with which it had been united under Italian occupation.

Following the decentralisation of the mid-1960s, the Kosovo Albanians demanded recognition as a nation (rather than a national minority) (4). They called for Kosovo to become a Yugoslav republic, arguing that they constituted a larger and more clearly defined national community than the Montenegrins, who already had the status of a nation and their own republic. The 1974 constitution granted the province of Kosovo (and Vojvodina) far-reaching autonomy that virtually gave it the status of a republic. It was granted a right of veto in federal bodies and its own political and cultural institutions, including a university in the Albanian language. This was the arrangement which Mr Milosevic overturned in 1989, on the grounds that the special status of Kosovo and Vojvodina was "anti-Serbian". In so doing, he ignored a historic opportunity to recognise the Kosovars as one of the constituent peoples of Yugoslavia at a time when their standard of living and the rights they enjoyed were superior to those in neighbouring Albania. Against this background, it is not surprising that Kosovars demonstrating against the Serbian authorities in 1990 carried portraits of Tito.

Tito's consolidation of the republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina (with its three constituent peoples: Serbs, Croats and ethnic Muslims) and Macedonia (5), with its own official language, was not artificial either, as is sometimes alleged. But it was a fragile arrangement that depended on the stability of the Yugoslav federal framework. That is why the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia fought desperately to maintain that framework. The unilateral declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia presented them with a tragic dilemma: to remain within a Yugoslavia dominated by Serbian nationalism or to declare independence and run the risk of intervention by Serbia and Croatia. (The reality of this threat was amply demonstrated by Mr Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman's jointly negotiated plan to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina between them.)

Contrary to the claim that the resurgence of nationalism was exclusively neo-communist, several types of nationalism emerged. In Serbia Mr Milosevic exploited the programme and slogans of Serb nationalism to bolster his leadership of the former communist party, which was renamed "socialist" at the beginning of the 1990s. But in Croatia nationalism was fostered mainly by anti-communist movements that often enjoyed support from abroad or from Croat émigré communities and were readily described as "democratic" on the strength of their respectably anti-communist credentials. In the early 1990s Mr Tudjman's main enemy was not Mr Milosevic. Behind the scenes, the two leaders connived to further each other's schemes. Mr Tudjman's real opponent was Mr Markovic, a Croatian liberal backed by the army, who continued to advocate a federal Yugoslavia.

The West's failure to punish war criminals, the unjust treatment of national issues and the growing development gaps will generate lasting conflicts

It was Mr Markovic, then head of the federal government, and not — as is sometimes claimed — Mr Milosevic, who sent the army into Slovenia after the unilateral declaration of independence in June 1991. The upsurge of Serb nationalism had a knock-on effect in Slovenia and Croatia. But the nationalist leaders in these two republics were mainly concerned to strengthen their hold on power and control the strategy for privatisation and the transition to capitalism. While the Slovenian leadership had sided with the Albanians in Kosovo, they were no longer prepared to pour money into the region.

Mr Markovic's party, and the liberals in general, failed to provide a viable alternative to backward-looking nationalism because the logic of the market which they championed was widening the gap between the regions and destroying the existing safeguards and burden-sharing arrangements. All the less developed republics were in favour of a Yugoslav system providing for the redistribution of wealth, whereas the rich republics of Slovenia and Croatia were against it. This conflict already existed under the communist self-management system, but it was accentuated by privatisation. Who was to benefit from the windfall — the federal authorities or the republics? The differences in the degree of development of the various regions encouraged the rich republics to opt for liberal economics, even if that meant going it alone. The prospect of joining the European Union also worked towards the disintegration of the system. The free-for-all of market competition encouraged the refusal to pay for others, especially in the framework of a redistributive budget. At the same time, economic crisis and unemployment fostered hostility to the market and, above all, to "foreigners".

Those are the underlying causes of the failure of Mr Markovic's government in the face of the nationalist parties. They were compounded by the Western governments' unwillingness to provide financial support. The United States wrote off most of Poland's debt, and Germany paid DM150 billion a year for unification from 1989 onwards. But Yugoslavia, in their view, had no strategic importance. It was worth neither a Marshall plan nor a war. Previously the issue of self-determination had been posed in the context of colonialism. Now it had arisen in a territory overlaid with successive conflicting patterns of earlier domination. Should precedence be given to the rights of peoples (in the ethnic or national sense) or to those of states? Should self-determination be equated with the establishment of a separate state? What rights should be granted to minorities, bearing in mind that those they had acquired under Tito were far in excess of the international norms laid down, for example, by the OSCE?

The Serbian leaders defended the right of Serbs to live together in a state of their own but refused that right to Albanians. The Croatian leaders rejected the claims of the Serbs in Croatia to the very same arrangements they were themselves trying to secure for the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Belgrade freely invoked the French centralist model to justify the abolition of autonomy in Kosovo, while Zagreb was widely applying the German principle of *Blutrecht* (nationality by ethnic origin).

The Western European powers are paying the price of their political cynicism. They sought to contain Serbian nationalism by strengthening the Croatian nationalists, who were given a free rein to "cleanse" Croatia of its Serbs. Mr Milosevic took advantage of this to turn Kosovo into an "internal affair", while proceeding to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina with his Croatian opposite number. The harsh realities make a mockery of the Western governments' declared aim of a peaceful, stable community of states in the Balkans. The failure to punish war criminals, the unjust treatment of national issues and the growing development gaps will generate lasting conflicts. The Europena Union itself has proved incapable of answering the two basic questions raised by the Yugoslav crisis and each successive conflict arising from the break-up of the Yugoslav federation: How can comparable standards of living be achieved in all the different countries, and by what system of democracy should a multinational territory be administered?

Translated by Barry Smerin

(1) There have been three entities called "Yugoslavia". The inter-war version, which adopted the name "Yugoslavia" in 1929, was dominated by the Serbian monarchy. The second, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia over which Tito presided until his death in 1980, ended in 1991 with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, followed by declarations of independence by Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia and Montenegro then proclaimed the third version, called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

(2) In Tito's Yugoslavia a distinction was made between "citizenship", automatically conferred on citizens of the federal state or one of the republics, and "nationality", ie, membership of a nation (*narod*) or people in the ethnic/cultural sense, which was freely chosen by the individual from the list of constituent nations having the right of self-determination. An individual was thus both a Yugoslav and a Serb, a Yugoslav and a Croat, etc. In 1981, however, more than a million people declared themselves to be of "Yugoslav" nationality.

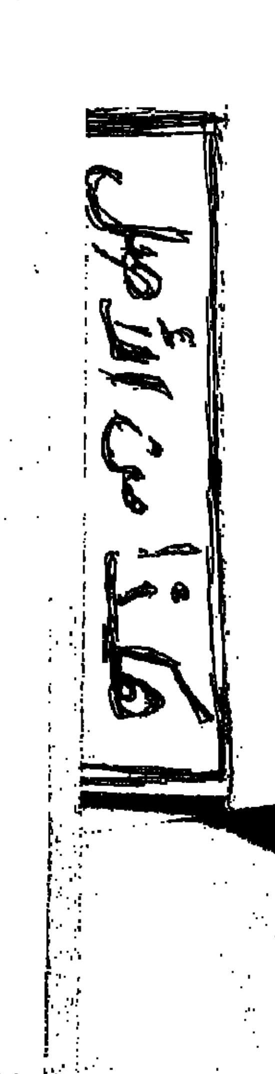
(3) This applies particularly to the Macedonian nation (and language), which is denied recognition by Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek nationalists, and also to the Bosnian "Muslim" nation (Islamised Slavs). Today, to avoid confusion between Muslims as a nation and Muslims as a religion, the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BIH) distinguishes between "Bosniaks" (Muslims by nation) and "Bosnians" (citizens of BiH, including Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats as the main peoples).

(4) The term "national minority", perceived as degrading, was replaced by *narodnost*, which is often translated as "nationality". "National community" would be a more accurate rendering.

(5) Now called FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

Integration to rebellion

- 1913: Kosovo is integrated into Serbia following the Balkan wars. In 1918 it became part of the new Yugoslav state.
- 1941: Dismemberment of the first Yugoslavia; Albania is enlarged by the inclusion of Kosovo and part of Macedonia, and falls under Italian fascist influence.
- 1946: Kosovo becomes an autonomous province as part of Tito's project for Yugoslav federation.
- 1948: With the split between Tito and Stalin, the plan for a Balkan confederation including Albania is shelved. Kosovo becomes a province of Serbia, with increasing autonomy from 1965.
- 1968: Demonstrations by ethnic Albanians in Kosovo demanding republican status within the Yugoslav federation.
- 1974: Under the new Yugoslav constitution Kosovo becomes an autonomous province of Serbia; it has semi-republican status with its own representation and power of veto within the Yugoslav federation.
- 1980: Death of Tito.
- Spring 1981: Tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians demand full republican status. The protests are violently put down.
- Summer 1988: Demonstration in Serbia under the slogan "Kosovo belongs to us".
- February 1989: General strike. On 23 February Belgrade declares a state of emergency in the region.
- March 1989: The Kosovo Provincial Assembly approves the new constitutional arrangements of 1974 adopted in Belgrade and the removal of the region's prerogatives. Further rioting in late March.
- July 1990: Serbia dissolves Albanian political institutions.
- September 1991: Following a secret referendum, a "republic" of Kosovo is declared, which is recognised by Albania.
- 24 May 1992: Ibrahim Rugova (Democratic Alliance of Kosovo) elected president in elections declared illegal by Belgrade.
- 14 December 1995: Dayton peace accords on Bosnia.
- February 1996: The Kosovo Liberation Army emerges, claiming responsibility for a series of bomb attacks
- February 1998: Offensive by the Serbian forces. Violent repression. New crisis.
- March 1998: "Parallel" elections in Kosovo in the Kosovo "republic", with a massive turn-out despite a boycott by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the opposition to Ibrahim Rugova's Democratic Alliance of Kosovo. Mr Rugova is re-elected president of the "Kosovo republic".
- March-October 1998: KLA offensives met by Serbian counter-offensives which gain control of the strategic axes.
- October 1998: Richard Holbrooke's mission to Slobodan Milosevic to get UN Resolution 1199 implemented. Threats of Nato intervention... Agreement of 13 October. Nato threats lifted on 27 October.



ISRAEL STEALTHILY 'CREATING FACTS ON THE GROUND'

Obstacles to peace

The Wye Plantation agreement reluctantly agreed by Binyamin Netanyahu is making near-impossible demands on Yasser Arafat. In return, Israel must further "redeploy" its troops. Yet Palestinian sovereignty would only extend to less than 20 per cent of the West Bank — a bad omen for final status talks. And all the while the building of Israeli settlements grinds quietly on.

BY GEOFFREY ARONSON

WHILE all eyes have been on the latest brokered accord in the Middle East, another, arguably more decisive effort to resolve the future of the territories captured by Israel in June 1967, is under way. Israel's policy of "creating facts on the ground" — establishing new Israeli settlements and expanding existing ones throughout the occupied territories — is well on its way to reaching an objective sought by a succession of Israeli leaders over the past three decades: preventing the creation of a independent, sovereign Palestinian political entity west of the Jordan.

During its more than two years in power, the Likud government of Binyamin Netanyahu has learned the art of "building quietly". Construction is continuing inexorably in the more than 170 settlement communities, housing some 350,000 Israelis, established across the pre-1967 war ceasefire line separating Israel from the West Bank and Gaza Strip (180,000 in annexed East Jerusalem, 164,500 in the West Bank and 5,500 in the Gaza Strip).

Tracking expansion in the settlements is more an art than a science. The Israeli authorities rarely make data available and press reports are usually imprecise and often contradictory. The minister of defence, Yitzhak Mordechai, has approved the additional construction of just over 2,000 units in the occupied territories, excluding East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, since Mr Netanyahu came to power. None the less, 5,000 units are reported in various phases of construction in the West Bank and Gaza.

At a meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee on 22 June, Yossi Sarid challenged Mr Mordechai to give an accurate account of the expansion: "I have already asked you twice to present before this committee all the approvals you have given for the expansion of settlements, and all you do is evade the question." (1)

The upsurge in settlement expansion in the West Bank which began during the summer of 1997 has continued this year. The Netanyahu "Around Jerusalem" construction plan is being directed by Nach Kinarti, who oversaw settlement expansion for the Labour government of the assassinated prime minister Yitzhak Rabin — a telling illustration of the national consensus in favour of the permanent retention of the West Bank between Ramallah and Hebron. If implemented, the plan for an "umbrella municipality" for Jerusalem and environs, unveiled recently, will bring West Bank settlements in "Greater Jerusalem" one administrative step further along the road to de facto annexation.

In the Etzion Bloc, south of Jerusalem, 630 new dwelling units are currently being built alongside 1,300 existing houses. Hundreds more are under construction in the larger settlement towns of Efrat, Ma'ale Adumim, and Betar. For the first time the settlers have started making concrete to meet the increased demand for construction materials. (2)

In the Benjamin region north and west of Jerusalem, more than 20,000 Israelis live in 30 settlements. Here there are 1,500 new dwellings under construction — enough to increase the population by 6,000. There is even expansion at Bet El, where 150 new homes are under construction, with an additional 50 expected to begin before the end of the year. Just north of Ramallah, Bet El is home to almost 700 families and is one of the few settlements that may come into closer proximity to territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority — if Israel redeploys its forces as required by the Oslo accords. Less than 10km south-west of Bet El lies the dormitory of Givat Ze'ev, a settlement whose population is now approaching 10,000. The road north meets a bypass built as part of Israel's redeployment from Ramallah so that Jerusalem-bound settlers from the Talmon settlement bloc to the north can avoid the Palestinian areas of Ramallah and Betunia.

Expansion is readily apparent throughout this bloc of settlement communities, which includes Dolev (population 500), Talmon A and B (800), Nachliel (300) and Halamish (1,000). At Dolev, ground preparation is well under way and new infrastructure is being built on a hill south of the existing settlement. At Talmon, a block of two-storey houses is almost completed. While just to the east, a new water tower marks the site of the new settlement of Horesh-Yaron where 13 mobile homes were sited almost a year ago. At Halamish and at the settlement of Paduel further to the north, land is being prepared for future expansion.

At the south-western approach to the settlement of Ariel, a sign announces one of the many new industrial parks now being built in the West Bank: Ariel South. Here a new interchange of the Trans-Samaria Highway (Road 5) is being re-routed and expanded. The 13% redeployment under discussion will leave this route securely under full Israeli control. Driving west, the few kilometres to the Green Line along Road 5 have been transformed into Israel, with a gaggle of Arab and Israeli commercial and industrial enterprises catering to the growing population on either side of the disappearing border.

Even in the Jordan Valley settlements with their economic problems and stagnant population, a new wave of expansion is taking place as part of a coalition agreement between Mr Netanyahu and the Third Way Party (formed by dissident Labour Party generals). (3)

The most recent comprehensive data available on settlement expansion covers the second half of last year, which saw an explosion in building starts throughout the occupied territories. New construction is under way at 93 of the 130 settlements in the West Bank. Because of their distance from existing facilities, at least 13 of these construction sites can be considered new settlements. Press reports place the number of new units under construction at 5,000 last year. And according to other sources, 4,000 more have been approved in the West Bank — enough to increase the settler population by more than 10%.

The increase in the settler population, according to Aaron Domb, the general secretary of the settler council Yesha (4), "is a positive achievement for the settlement project and comes in spite of political constraints connected to the construction of apartments in Jewish areas of Judea and Samaria". A diplomatic observer commented that "the number of [construction] starts is extraordinary considering how low demand is in Israel and the growth rate in the settlements themselves".

Preliminary figures for the first 10 months of last year show double-digit population increases in settlements: 11.2% in the Nablus region, 10.2% in the Ramallah region, and 10% in Gaza — more than three times the national Israeli rate. Almost 80% of the 4,000 to 5,000 dwelling units on which construction began last year have been sold, according to numbers compiled by the prime minister's office. This surprising level of demand, in contrast to the slowdown in the Israeli housing market, comes from the less expensive housing prices in settlements compared with costs in Israel itself. For example, a detached villa of 150 square metres in the small settlement of Nokdim, south-east of Bethlehem, sells for $110,000 — the price of a two-room flat in Jerusalem.

In another demonstration of the government's effort to "create facts" in anticipation of further army redeployment and final status talks with the Palestinians, one well-informed source reports that government-financed infrastructure work is proceeding at between 80 and 90 of the 120 West Bank settlements. In most cases, this work is being undertaken on lands for which at present there are no approved construction plans. Plans to build more than 9,000 dwelling units in West Bank settlements — one report puts the figure at 20,000 (5) — are in the process of being approved.

In August 1996, Mr Mordechai was invested with the power to approve all settlement construction. Since then, he has given final approval for fewer than 2,500 new units. How then was construction begun on more than twice as many dwellings? Many of the units begun last year were actually approved during the government of Yitzhak Shamir but were frozen after 1992 by Mr Rabin. The Rabin government itself approved more dwellings than were actually begun during its tenure. Taking a page from Labour's book, the Netanyahu government appears to be quietly "unfreezing" many of these units after deciding that construction could start without Mr Mordechai's formal approval. And most of this building work is taking place in smaller settlements and, inexplicably, has not been included in government statistics.

In spite of this expansion, the organisation Peace Now reports a vacancy rate of 25% (454 units out of 1,800) in the Gaza settlements. Yet tenders for the construction of 100 new units were recently issued for the Gaza settlement of Nisanit, near the Jabaliya refugee camp.

The surge in settlement expansion towards the end of last year came just as the Clinton administration was expressing the need to include some measure of restraint in the Netanyahu government's expansion policies, and at a time when Netanyahu himself was making assurances that "there won't be any substantial expansion of settlements and no substantial confiscation [of land]". At the time, US diplomacy towards the issue of settlement expansion focused on the need for a halt in "unhelpful unilateral acts . . . that prejudge issues reserved for final status negotiations", as stated by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a speech before the National Press Club on 6 August 1997. This formulation was later reconstituted as a "time-out" in settlement expansion, and most recently explained as an effort to restrict settlement expansion to already built-up areas comprising approximately 3% of the West Bank. (6)

In response to reports of large-scale settlement expansion, the State Department has galvanised its intelligence and monitoring efforts. But US attempts to receive prompt information from the Netanyahu government have been stymied by the defence ministry. According to well-informed sources, a top Mordechai aide refused a request made by US ambassador Ned Walker for information on settlement housing expansion in the West Bank, noting that the release of such information would only cause problems between Israel and the US. The US request, not inconsistent with promises made by Netanyahu to President Clinton at their first meeting in June 1996, was not repeated. Indeed, a cable under Walker's signature is said to have been sent to

Continued on page 7

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Green Line
Jerusalem municipal boundaries
Palestinian villages
fewer than 3,000 inhabitants
3,000 to 6,000 inhabitants
Other Palestinian areas and urban centres (more than 6,000 inhabitants)
Israeli settlements
sparsely populated
highly populated
planned expansion
Circulation
Access roads to Israeli settlements (restricted access to Palestinian vehicles. Control checks)
access roads planned or under construction
Palestinian roads (unrestricted access)
Territorial redistribution since the accords
Palestinian autonomy (Oslo I)
Zone A : Palestinian autonomy (Oslo II)
Zone B : Territories under joint control (Oslo II). This zone also contains virtually all Arab villages geographically sited in Zone C
Zone C : Territories still under Israeli control (Oslo II)
Territory of East Jerusalem annexed by Israel in 1967 is excluded from the interim accords
Mediterranean Sea
Gaza
NETZARIM
Deir al-Balah
ISRAEL
TULKARM
KALKILYA
ELKANA
OFARIM
JORDAN
JERICHO
WEST JERUSALEM
EAST JERUSALEM
HEBRON

Continued from page 6

Washington advising that the US refrain from further efforts to constrain settlement expansion.

The Palestinian leadership has distinguished itself by its almost total lack of interest in or familiarity with settlements. They have not been able to avoid seeing the growing suburbs of Jerusalem; but mention places such as Dolev or Talmon — the Ma'ale Adumims and Givat Ze'evs of tomorrow — and their faces go blank. The diplomatic path that the Palestinians have joined, and the conditions it imposes, leave them few options materially to change either the pace or the implications of Israel's settlement policies.

Those who oversaw the creation of Oslo either wilfully ignored the centrality of settlements or, more likely, inexplicably failed to understand their importance as the prime indicator of Israeli intentions. There is a widely held belief among diaspora Palestinians involved in talks with Israel that the physical transformation of the land brought about by settlement expansion can (and will) be undone by a political decision. They cite the precedent of Yamit and other Sinai settlements, which were dismantled in 1982 after the peace deal with Egypt. This is to forget that Israel ceded the Sinai precisely in order to safeguard its control of the West Bank. And that a peace agreement between two strong states such as Egypt and Israel is qualitatively different from an Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement.

There is today no powerful, articulate voice among the Palestinian leadership arguing that a halt to settlement expansion is a basic requirement of any negotiating framework. Yasser Arafat is briefed infrequently on Israel's settlement policy and his response is generally stunned silence as he looks at the map. Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Ahmad Qurai (Abu Ala) have never been on a "settlement tour". Settlements can, they believe, be made to disappear or to dry up with the stroke of an Israeli diplomat's pen. For them, the most important objective is to establish the foundations for Palestinian sovereignty on whatever territories Israel can be convinced to surrender.

The "American initiative", which they approved in London in early June, simply required Israel not to construct new settlements or to engage in the "substantial expansion" of settlements outside contiguous areas. These are the exact formulations that Netanyahu has himself used for more than a year. And during this period almost 20 new settlement areas have been established and the ground has been broken for thousands of new settlement dwelling units.

All this testifies to the failure not only of the Palestinians to contain Israel's settlement drive, but also of the US to impart any real meaning to its vociferous demand for a "time-out". More than two years after the Likud leader's victory, US policy makers have yet to recover from the defeat of Shimon Peres. In the absence of an Israeli partner ready to implement the Oslo accords, the Clinton administration has proven unable to agree upon a credible strategy for fulfilling even the limited prospects of the Oslo framework.

The Palestinians' tacit agreement to permit Israel to maintain and expand settlements has established a precedent that will be difficult to alter in final-status talks. And more Palestinians are beginning to acknowledge that allowing any settlements to remain in the final status will prevent any credible degree of Palestinian sovereignty, not necessarily because of the settlements themselves (which directly control less than 15% of the West Bank), but because the extensive security measures required to ensure their existence — including the ever-expanding system of roads linking settlements with each other and with Israel — are such as to justify the permanent presence of the Israeli army.

Original text in English

(1) *Haaretz*, Tel Aviv, 23 June 1998.
(2) *Kol Hair*, Jerusalem, 10 July 1998.
(3) *Kol Hair*, 3 July 1998.
(4) Yesha is the contraction of Yehuda ve Shomron (Judea and Samaria), the Biblical name used by supporters of a Greater Israel for the West Bank.
(5) *Maariv*, Tel Aviv, 11 January 1998.
(6) This refers to areas on which there are settlement buildings. The total area in the hands of the settlers is 15% of the West Bank.

SOVEREIGNISTS IN LOVE WITH THE AMERICAN MODEL

Quebec's PQ worn out by power

The debate in Quebec over sovereignty is never-ending. As long as the issue remains unresolved, it will eclipse all others, both in Ottawa and in the province of Quebec. Its prime minister, Lucien Bouchard, has just announced early provincial elections, and if the ruling Parti québécois wins, it could lead to a new referendum on self-determination; the last one was narrowly defeated in 1995. But if Mr Bouchard carries on with economic policies as conventional as those of the federal government, he will have a hard time convincing the electorate of the virtues of a sovereign Quebec.

CHRISTOPHE WARGNY

PARIS – MONTREAL: Air Canada flies between the largest two French-speaking cities in the developed world. On both the outbound and return flights, the flight attendant offers passengers a choice between two English-language Canadian dailies, the *Globe & Mail* of Toronto and *The Gazette* of Montreal. Their French-language competitors (*Le Devoir*, *La Presse* and *Le Journal de Montréal*) are conspicuous by their absence. Innocent oversight? Or perhaps passengers are getting an introduction to Quebec's language debate and national question. Since the October 1995 referendum on sovereignty, which fell short by 40,000 votes, the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada has been a permanent fixture on the political agenda (1).

The political bosses in Ottawa and Quebec City share the same political ideology of "less government intervention" and "the economy comes first". Bernard Landry, Quebec's deputy premier and a zealous promoter of a zero public deficit, is convinced that, when the time comes, Ottawa, Washington and Paris will give him his due as a staunch supporter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in particular and globalisation in general (2): "One should not throw stones at the crocodiles before crossing the river," he reminds people, quoting a Haitian proverb.

The gulf that separates English and French Canada is getting wider, not in constitutional texts but in the way people live their lives. The bilingual Canada envisioned by Pierre-Elliott Trudeau exists only within the shadow of government buildings in Ottawa, and perhaps not even there. Take, for example, the appointment last June of David Levine, an avowed "sovereignist", as director of one of the city's leading hospitals. Though the hospital's board of directors based its decision on competence, the appointment was widely denounced in English Canada. It will not be long before bilingualism survives only on paper, in unenforced laws — except among Ontarians who live on the south shore of the Ottawa River, closer to Montreal, and among the Acadians of New Brunswick who are proud of their unique culture.

Is it possible to achieve independence without progressive policies? In Quebec, the different currents in the pro-sovereignty movement agree on at least one point: Trudeau's effort to "build a single nation" was in fact a declaration of war on any recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society", and the ultimate result can only be that French will become the second language in all parts of the country. This is the scenario that Yves Michaud, named patriot of the year in 1997, calls "Louisianisation" — or the transition from humiliation to assimilation.

The trend is seen by many as inevitable (the term most commonly used) — for some, as inevitable as the sovereignty of Quebec. The possible sticking point is Montreal, the hub of the province: though the industrialisation and rural exodus of the 19th century prevented Montreal from becoming English, today the city has a high concentration of "allophones" (people whose mother tongue is neither English nor French), Anglophones, the upper middle class and executives of multinational firms — all of whom tend to be hostile to separation. The city accounts for 45% of the population of Quebec and therefore plays a key role in deciding victory in the national debate.

But the ruling PQ (Parti québécois) is counting on old-stock Francophones to win a new referendum, which could be called if the PQ wins the upcoming provincial parliamentary elections; to accomplish this it would need to garner the support of two-thirds of this group — something that has never yet happened. "We must explain the meaning of political independence in terms everyone can understand and place it in its contemporary context — that of a culturally diverse Quebec," says Michel Sarra-Bournet, historian and former adviser to Premier Lucien Bouchard. "We must make it everyone's business" (3).

Alain-G Gagnon, director of the Quebec Studies Program at Montreal's McGill University, a bastion of federalism and symbol of the Anglophone presence (Anglophones account for 55% of its students), sees a logjam in Canada's institutions (4). In his view, there has been a total breakdown in mutual understanding. Anglophones reject Quebec particularism and any recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society", even within Canada; they view individual rights as paramount and adequately protected.

Land of immigrants

WHILE Quebecers see themselves as a nation, others see them as French speakers. Outside Quebec, Canada is viewed as a land of immigrants, a land where geography counts for more than history. And the fact that Quebecers — of the anti-sovereignist persuasion, to be sure — are over-represented in the federal government further confuses the picture. From the PQ perspective, an Anglophone prime minister in Ottawa — the current premier, Jean Chrétien, is a Francophone — would make the battle easier.

PQ policies are unpopular: congested hospital emergency departments, waiting lists for operations, reductions in support for the unemployed, staff cuts in education, reduced support for students who repeat courses, a rising dropout rate which sees more and more students completing their compulsory schooling without obtaining a diploma; a growth in private schools and pressure on educational establishments to borrow or find sponsors.

"We didn't elect the PQ to weaken the social safety net or heighten inequalities" is the message being sent by the union rank-and-file to their leaders, who have made deals with the provincial government. The PQ rank-and-file too is grumbling, even though Mr Bouchard is exploiting his charisma and Ottawa's grudge against him to the hilt (he had faithfully served the federal government before becoming the man Ottawa loves to hate). Many are dumbfounded by his mixture of "Anglophobia" (anti-federalism) and "Americanophilia" (economic liberalism). They remind him that it was the provincial government which harnessed the land's wealth, be it hydropower or brainpower, spurred the rise of a powerful middle class and led Quebec out of the dark days of clericalism mixed with economic backwardness in the 1960s. For many PQ activists, the idea of the state as a vehicle for both economic development and social solidarity is the foundation of sovereignist aspirations; hence the growing rift with the PQ leadership.

The objective seems to be to win the provincial election, and then hold a referendum at the right moment. What the PQ has in mind is sovereignty-association, which Mr Landry defines as freely chosen citizenship, Quebec collecting all taxes and using them in accordance with its own priorities, autonomy in international relations, a monetary union with the rest of Canada, division of the national debt, and increased economic integration under NAFTA (or an expanded version of it).

In order for Chrétien, who rejected any kind of "distinct" Quebec, to block Mr Bouchard and his party, he needed to find an adversary to the PQ who could attract both die-hard federalists and sovereignists disappointed by the PQ's lack of radicalism. The Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), spurred by Ottawa, thinks that Jean Charest may fit the bill. He is the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party who resigned as a federal member of parliament in order to wage battle in Quebec. He is young (aged 40), cultivates a resemblance to Bill Clinton, speaks — or rather communicates — well, and seems to stay clear of left-right divisions, which are not always entirely understood in North America.

New ideas are springing up outside the PQ as well as from its grassroots. They receive scant attention in the media, which tends to be conformist and federalist. In one poll, half of young respondents expressed mistrust or hostility toward the PQ-PLQ monopoly on political life. Seventy-three per cent of Quebecers, and an even higher percentage of young Quebecers, felt that there should be "a left-wing political party dedicated to the needs of workers and the underprivileged" (5). This does not necessarily mean they would, or even could, vote for such a party in a first-past-the-post (one round) electoral system, in which it is so important not to "waste" your vote.

The RAP (Rassemblement pour une alternative politique), a pro-sovereignty socialist group which is fiercely hostile to the powers that be, is providing a forum for hundreds of old and new political activists across Quebec, but it is only a party in embryonic form. The fact that it has been launched at all in these gloomy 1990s may be considered an achievement in itself. But even confronting a worn-out PQ, a leftwing alternative would not be credible unless it was able to tap into social and cultural struggles, and avoid being totally ignored by the media.

Meanwhile the PQ is not inclined to share its monopoly on the idea of sovereignty. Election fever tends to favour the established political blocs, but with the PQ staking its future on the American model, it no longer inspires enthusiasm. For most of its members, becoming more liberal means having less of a social conscience. Many think the party needs a good kick in the pants. This can only come from within Quebec. But which Quebec?

Translated by Stuart Anthony Stilitz

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(1) See Bernard Cassen, "Pour les Québécois, un pays à portée de la main", *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1997. See also the book by Claude Bariteau, *Québec, 18 septembre 2001*, (Éditions Québec Amérique, Montreal, 1998, 388 pages, Can$26.95) in which the author, a Laval University professor, argues that British methods of indirect rule explain the emergence of the Quebec sovereignty movement. Perfected in the Crown colonies, indirect rule leads to the subordination and then the cultural derogation of conquered peoples, and uses local intermediaries — in this case Quebec federalists — to control the conquered populations. This accounts for the close link between cultural affirmation and the ideal of independence.
(2) See Ignacio Ramonet, "Québec et mondialisation", Le Monde diplomatique, April 1996.
(3) In this context, see Bernard Landry (ed.), *Le Pays de tous les Québécois*, VLB éditeur, Montreal, 1998.
(4) See Edgard Pisani, "Le Canada, laboratoire institutionnel à hauts risques", and the reaction it provoked "Quels scénarios pour le Canada ?", in the January and May 1998 editions, respectively, of *Le Monde diplomatique*.
(5) Poll published in *Le Devoir*, 1 May 1998.

MEXICO'S TROUBLES ARE NOT JUST IN CHIAPAS

Guerrero has its own guerrillas

Rather than implement the San Andres accords signed in February 1996 with the Zapatista National Liberation Army, President Ernesto Zedillo chose to renege on his undertakings, form death squads and militarise Chiapas. This anti-insurgency strategy has caused the death of more than 100 people. Zedillo has followed the same policy in other states where poverty and repression are making people more radical — in particular, Guerrero.

BY MAURICE LEMOINE

AS THE road wends its way through the massive Sierra Madre del Sur, the faces of the people change until they are purely native. From the state capital, Chilpancingo (1), we pass through five hours of forest, rock, giant cacti and poor fields before sighting Tlapa de Comonfort, the administrative centre of the part of Guerrero aptly known as La Montaña (the mountain).

Apart from the market the peasants go to at the weekend, there is no industry, no paid employment. Nothing. Reinforcing rods sprout from the many buildings under way which get finished as they get orders from "on high". Twenty-two-year-old Benito says he's planning to follow his four cousins to the United States.

But there is one new activity that has recently brought life to the town: a barracks with 600 soldiers. People lower their voices to tell you the alleged reason, a murky story of armed bands. "It started in Chiapas," Juan Basurto confides, "but they're more political there. Marcos is known the world over. But here it's another group and they're less well known."

Benito has read in the papers about this Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) operating in the Guerrero scrublands. He stresses it's through the papers. Being active in the Union of Indigenous Montaña Communities (UCIM), he has got his own ideas about them. "They're nothing to do with us," he is careful to explain, "but we respect them. They're working for society just as we are, but by different means."

Tlapa lies at the heart of La Montaña, the hilliest part of the state, 600 to 3,000 metres above sea level. It is very poor. Its maize, beans, rice and other products don't generate much income. Where it is very cold, nor does the *milpa* (2). Two straw hats that took a day to make fetch one peso (3). They will be sold on for 17 pesos each by the *acaparadores* (itinerant traders). La Montaña is populated by Indians — Nahuas, Mixteques, Tlapaneques — who also earn little. They have their traditions, they sow and reap their meagre crops and sell them cheap. Wood is something they literally give away. And they are not political people.

Apart from his work in the UCIM, Benito is active in the opposition with Cuauhtemoc Cardenas's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Passionate about his native ancestry (he is of mixed race) and sporting a large T-shirt blazoned with the words Hard Rock Café and a huge Mickey Mouse, Benito carries his UCIM leaflets everywhere and dreams of San Francisco or Washington. "We believe class consciousness comes from knowing what class you belong to and who your enemies are (the state, the bourgeoisie, imperialism)." He respectfully uncovers his head outside the imposing church that dominates Chalpatlahua, considering it a place of miracles. Benito represents the real Guerrero.

Tototepec is not one of the many completely cut off *caserios* (hamlets), but it is still extremely poor. Only supporters of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has been in power for as long as anyone can remember, sometimes get some help — rice, beans or sugar — generally in the run-up to elections. They are short of everything. "There's water," says Primo Alvarez, a *mestizo* (mixed-race) bilingual teacher, "and if we had a pump everyone would benefit. There's timber, but no means to exploit it. We could make lime, the stone's the right kind, but we haven't got the means."

The PRD militants, the minority in this village held by the PRI, are fighting with the authorities to get fertiliser. On 1 June the only response was a visit from the *judiciales* (the judicial police) and the army. Doors were kicked in, houses ransacked, cooking utensils smashed, grain scattered to the winds. A young woman was raped in front of her husband. "They accused me of being an EPR leader," sighs Primo Alvarez. As well as


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being head of the local school, which has five other teachers, and taking a class of 45 himself, he also has to look after his field; his monthly salary of 1,600 pesos ($200) is not enough to live on. "How could I find the time to join an armed group?" Pointing dispiritedly at his shack, he goes on, "Instead of sending the army in, they should build schools and canteens, and give us allowances, clothes and shoes for the children."

It was on 13 July when the army appeared in Cochoapa al Grande, a remote outback up above the clouds. They went from house to house, searching through everything. People were beaten up. Not everyone, just the PRD "subversives". Like everywhere else, the army regularly sets up road blocks. In this divided community, the *comisario* (4) is a PRD member. Since his election, electricity has appeared. Before him, the PRI *comisario* had funding for a bridge. There's still no bridge. In this community, the rifts run deep.

The "official" party also knows how to get its message across. At 5pm dozens of peasants head in single file for the *caserio*, their tools on their shoulders. A government programme is paying them to re-forest the eroded hillsides. All, without exception, are members of the PRI. No one marked out as an opposition supporter can benefit from the scheme. "People are tired," one of the locals puts it warily. "There's a story about a guerrilla unit from the old days led by Lucio Cabañas. It'll happen again. There'll end up being a war or something."

A young man with him is, unusually, much more direct. Gazing at the mountain peaks all round, he says, "It's a good thing 'they' are there because now, if we have a problem, they'll come and help us." He won't tell us his name. People have died for less.

Like Chiapas and Oaxaca, its neighbours in misfortune, Guerrero is one of Mexico's poorest states. In the 1960s, which began with the Chilpancingo massacre (30 December 1960), the demands of the *copra* (coconut kernels) and coffee growers, teachers and students were met with violent repression. In 1963 a schoolmaster, Genaro Vásquez, took up arms at the head of the National Civic Revolutionary Association (ACNR). Following the massacre of *copra* producers on 20 August 1967 in Acapulco, another teacher, Lucio Cabañas, founded the Party of the Poor (PDLP). Armed action grew in the 1970s, culminating on 29 May 1974 with the abduction of Ruben Figueroa (senior), a PRI candidate for the post of state governor known for his gangster methods (5). The manhunt began, and Cabañas died in an ambush the following December. The party was smashed and its surviving members went underground.

The army conducted a fierce cleaning-up operation in the region, leaving 100 dead and more than 300 disappeared. "In those days", a village elder recalls, "human rights didn't exist." But slowly, people have raised their spirits. A union of *ejidos* (6) was formed on the Costa Grande (7) south of La Montaña. "We had delegates in all communities," Hilario Acosta recalls. "The government invited all the delegates, gave them food, money and women, and asked them to join the National Peasants' Confederation [CNC – an official union]. The day the new board was elected, they all voted for the CNC." Those who would not be bribed started again, forming a coalition of *ejidos* and starting to work on marketing coffee. "But the PRI infiltrated it and the coalition split," said Acosta.

Still, it was not the time for throwing in the towel. After the election of Carlos Salinas de Gortari as president in 1988, the peasants told the losing candidate Cardenas — later to found and lead the PRD — that they would "give their lives to defend the vote". His decision to follow "the legal path" caused much frustration. Though they have remained loyal to the PRD, whose anti-establishment influence is growing considerably in Guerrero, the peasants have learned their lesson; to rely first and foremost on themselves.

January 1994 saw the birth of the Sierra del Sur Peasants' Organisation (OCSS), the most powerful of the many movements that have now turned Guerrero into a seething cauldron. After several months' gestation, the OCSS — which brings together *mestizos* and indigenous people without distinction — surfaced several days after the uprising of a mysterious army in neighbouring Chiapas. Governor Figueroa set out to destroy the OCSS, which stubbornly refused to be corrupted. They were all accused of maintaining links with the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). There followed assassinations, arrests and reprisals.

It was to protest at the disappearance of one of their number, Gilberto Romero, that more than 100 members of the OCSS set off for Atoyac de Alvarez by lorry on 27 June 1995. The security forces stopped the convoy at the village of Aguas Blancas. They made some of these unarmed civilians get down from the trucks and opened fire. Marino Sanchez recalls: "I was lying on the ground with bullets flying all round me and we were totally surrounded by police. I saw them putting injured comrades out of their misery." It was a nightmare — 17 peasants killed and more than 20 wounded.

A year later, none of the instigators of the massacre had been brought to justice. The only thing this popular mobilisation achieved was the resignation of Governor Ruben Figueroa (junior). On the anniversary of the massacre, during a commemoration ceremony at the site attended by 6,000 people, a hundred or so armed men and women appeared, their faces masked by the inevitable balaclava. The Popular Revolutionary Army had shown itself in public for the first time. "After the initial surprise," a witness recalls with a smile, "you could see the delight on people's faces. A lot of them clapped. A priest went over and kissed them, saying 'At last!'" A communiqué was read out, the Aguas Blancas Manifesto, not exactly in the lyrical prose of Subcommandante Marcos: "We want a democratic people's republic and we call for people's courts to try the enemies of the people."

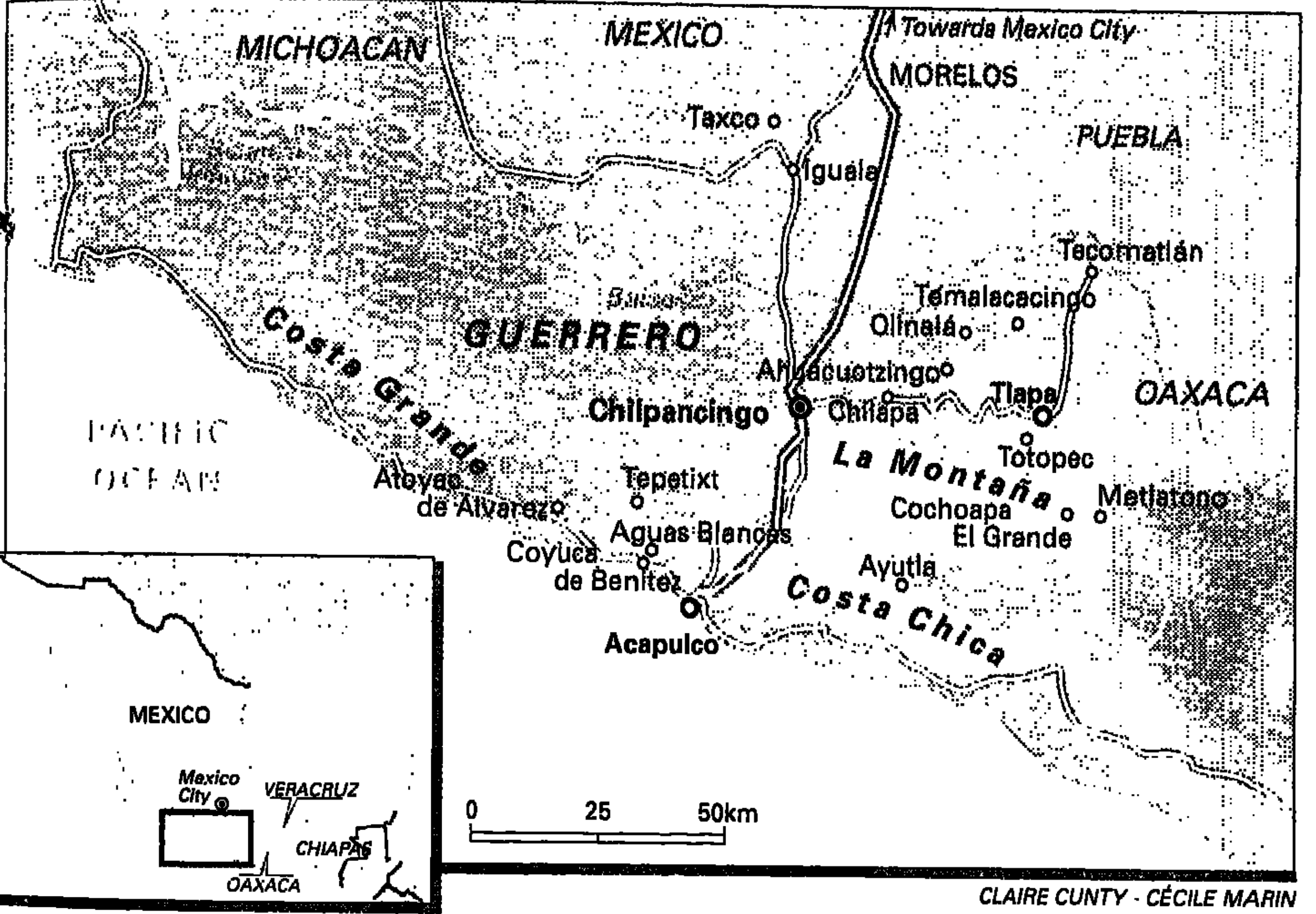
The Zedillo government, which trapped the Zapatistas in talks that were just window-dressing, tried to gain credence for the idea that there were good guerrillas, the EZLN, with a social base, and bad ones, the EPR without one. It was assisted, perhaps not consciously to begin with, by Subcommandante Marcos, who made some icy remarks. The "newcomers" would have to "earn their legitimacy". Commandante José Arturo sent a biting reply: "Whose pardon are we supposed to seek for not letting the government continue to murder people? And for our armed uprising? The government's, perhaps?' (8). He concluded: "Poetry cannot be the continuation of politics by other means."

Though relations are not cordial, they have become less tense. Without glossing over the differences, the EPR refers to the EZLN with respect. But it does not hide the fact that its aim is to take power and it is prepared to combine civilian and military means to do it.

The EPR had been in existence for many years. If it meets with little enthusiasm, it is because of the dominant role within it of the clandestine Workers' Revolutionary Party Union of the People-Party of the Poor (Procup-PDLP). Born in the 1960s, this very secretive Maoist-oriented organisation "has more than a bad reputation", in the words of Enrique Avila, one of the leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN) formed in civilian society at the instigation of Subcommandante Marcos. "Over the last 20 years it has killed several *compañeros* belonging to what it calls the reformist left."

Nor has the Procup ever hesitated from eliminating dissidents. Over the years, Procup has helped the Party of the Poor to reorganise and regain a foothold in Guerrero. It controls 14 revolutionary organisations (9) which have moved closer together, though they continue to act independently. The Zapatista uprising and the hope it inspired accelerated its unification and on 1 May 1994 this disparate group formed into a single front, the EPR. On 18 May 1996 it set up a single political/military structure with one army.

On 30 August 1996 the EPR went on the offensive in seven of the country's states, in particular in its fiefdoms of Guerrero and Oaxaca (it is also present in Veracruz and Chiapas). At the end of October, it renewed its campaign of violence, reportedly killing 10 members of the security forces. Sporadic



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actions followed. No frontal assaults, just limited attacks. A guerrilla spokesman, "Manuel", admitted that they were just at a stage of self-defence.

"We've been compared to the Shining Path. We're not provocateurs. We've been working for 20 years with people who are dying of hunger. Aguas Blancas accelerated the process. The social base asked what could be done and we answered the call. Socialism isn't on the agenda and armed struggle can't bring about change on its own. All forms of democratic, peaceful and parliamentary struggle are necessary. But we also need armed pressure." One question remains. At present, with no mention of internal dissent leaking out, does Manuel still belong to the EPR or is he already in the Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army (ERPI)?

It was the events of El Charco (Costa Chica) that brought the ERPI's existence to light. In Acteal (10) and Aguas Blancas it was the same sad story. At dawn on 7 June this year the army attacked a school where several dozen locals were gathered and, after a "confrontation" lasting six hours, killed 11 guerrillas without any army losses. Survivors and prisoners protested that there had been no guerrillas, no resistance and that the victims (most of them inhabitants of the village) had been killed in cold blood.

While some of the accusations were true, irrefutable evidence of the presence of guerillas was provided by ambushes of an army column in the Tierra Caliente region on 22 June, and of a patrol of *judiciales* on the Chilapa-Tlapa road (La Montaña) on 4 July. "Yes, we were at a meeting with some peasants in Al Charco. The *compas* (11) didn't take the necessary security measures and we were taken by surprise." This previously unknown group claimed this was their response.

Sixty per cent of EPR commandos are deployed in Guerrero. The ERPI was born on 8 January this year of a split between fighting units in Guerrero and the leadership of the Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party (PDPR), a clandestine political arm, in the state. Commandantes Antonio and Santiago explained: "In August many communities were demanding a response to aggression. The EPR failed to respond, instead organising operations that failed to meet the expectations of the people but were linked more to economic events within the country. We would suggest responses to repression but we never got EPR authorisation to go ahead."

Future operations will be determined by the need to respond to acts of violence by the authorities. "This army used to belong to a party, but we're giving it back to the people. You decide what we must do." Words which could have come from the Zapatistas, even though there are still no links with them (12). But the ERPI admits that the EZLN has made major contributions to democracy with the slogan, Command and Obey. In this sense, there has been a rapprochement — unilateral until now.

Of the 580 PRD activists assassinated over the past few years, 207 (35%) were in Guerrero. Accused of being an EPR leader, which he strongly denies, former PRD deputy Bernardo Ranferi was forced to seek political asylum in France. Since 1996 a "black list" has been circulating of 106 names drawn up by the paramilitary Confidential 08 group linking the "future targets" to the armed struggle. OCSS leader Norma Mesino claims that 34 of her organisation's activists have been killed on the Costa Grande since 1995. Last July one of their leaders, Eusebio Vásquez, was assassinated. Tepetixtla police chief José Vargas had been threatening him for a long time, but one of their own men, Erasto Hurtado, was arrested and accused of the murder. The aim was to paint the OCSS as a violent organisation, and also to split it.

Fifty-two members of the Broad Construction Front of the National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN), a grouping of 300 trade unions, parties and organisations formed in Acapulco and particularly active in Guerrero, are in prison on a wide variety of charges. As a result, despite government pressure, the FAC-MLN has refused expressly to condemn the armed struggle. The state's militarisation is increasing apace and, as in Chiapas, the paramilitaries leave a trail of blood in their wake.

A dusty village on a hilltop in the heart of La Montaña. Sitting round a table with a beer, Indian militants of the PRD, teachers, are contemplating the forthcoming elections. In all probability, the PRD will take the post of governor in Guerrero next February and the presidency of the republic in 2000 with the engineer, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas. The talk is both determined — "We continue to believe in change by democratic means" — and disillusioned. "People don't believe the democratic struggle will succeed."

While the government, acting under pressure from the EZLN, the PRD and international opinion has opened up politically, going so far as to concede Mr Cardenas's victory as mayor of Mexico City in July last year and the PRI's loss of its absolute majority in Congress, everyone knows that nothing has changed in the feudal countryside where the local big shots hold sway.

Chilpancingo and Acapulco swung into the PRD camp in the 6 July, 1997 local elections, it is true, but the rural areas are still controlled by the PRI. For several months now it has been combing the countryside, buying off people's consciences, distributing gifts, clothing, maize and fertiliser. "These people are so poor, if you give them a meal, a few beans, they'll follow you wherever you want, like a flock of sheep." What is more, Figueroa (junior), who was forced to resign after the Aguas Blancas murders, has announced his return to politics to prevent an opposition victory in the state by whatever means.

In Guerrero's poorest township, Metlatonóc, the PRD's Felipe Ortiz warns: "The government has two options: to respect the wishes of the people or make them even more radical. Guerrero is a powder keg that could explode at any moment." For its part, the ERPI has already shown its colours: it is in a phase of "silently building up its forces" to help in an insurrection. "We think it is necessary to prepare because there may, under certain circumstances, be triggers that cause the masses to rise up."

Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Veracruz — the whole of the south of Mexico is hesitating between violence and civil peace. No one here will wager on what will happen if Mr Cardenas loses the 2000 presidential election — even if there are no irregularities. If anything stupid happens before then, such as electoral fraud in Guerrero or military intervention in Chiapas, everything could change. "If the army attacks the EZLN," the EPR (or ERPI)'s "Manuel" reported earlier this year, "Marcos has said he doesn't want a saviour. But we can't stand idly by. We would move from self-defence to a declaration of war."

The guerrillas have no future as such in a Mexico where the electoral option now exists and where the PRD is feeding reformist aspirations. But they will have a bright future and lasting legitimacy if social and political democracy fail to take root in the poorest states. Rather than reducing the danger, the authorities are increasing it, simply pressing on a lever. As he left the UCIM office in Tlapa, Benito met a policeman. The man stopped him, put his hand on his arm, looked him coldly in the eye and simply said: "I know who you are. And I know what you're doing."

Translated by Malcolm Greenwood

Who's who in Mexico

- ACNR: National Civic Revolutionary Association. Guerrilla group founded in Guerrero by Genaro Vásquez in 1963.
- CNC: National Peasants' Confederation. The "official" peasants' organisation.
- EPR: Popular Revolutionary Army. Armed opposition movement that surfaced in Guerrero on 28 June 1996.
- ERPI: Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army. Result of a split in the EPR on 8 January 1998.
- EZLN: Zapatista National Liberation Army. Surfaced in Chiapas on 1 January 1994.
- FAC-MLN: Broad Construction Front of the National Liberation Movement. National grouping of 300 organisations, unions and parties, "friendly rival" of the FZLN.
- FZLN: Zapatista National Liberation Front. Formed in 1996 to popularise and disseminate the EZLN's demands within "civil society".
- OCSS: Peasant organisation of Sierra del Sur. The largest peasant movement in Guerrero.
- PAN: National Action Party. Third largest party after the PRI and PRD, right-wing, conservative opposition.
- PDLP: Party of the Poor. Guerrillas active in Guerrero from 1967-74.
- PDPR: Popular Democratic Revolutionary Party. Political arm of the EPR.
- PRD: Party of the Democratic Revolution, social-democratic in trend.
- PRI: Institutional Revolutionary Party. In power, under different names, since the 1910-17 revolution.
- Procup-PDLP: Clandestine Workers' Revolutionary Party Union of the People-Party of the Poor. Clandestine organisation of Maoist ideology. Better known as Procup.
- UCIM: Union of Indigenous La Montaña Communities.

(1) Mexico is made up of 31 states and a federal district. In this article, "state" means the state of Guerrero and not Mexico itself.
(2) Maize field.
(3) $1 = 10 peso (November 1998).
(4) Equivalent of a mayor in hamlets.
(5) See *Guerre sociale au Guerrero*, "Opuscules et pamphlets", vol. I and II, Syllepse, Paris, 1997.
(6) Farming community that grew out of the Mexican revolution.
(7) Guerrero has five regions: Montaña, Centro, Tierra Caliente, Costa Chica and Costa Grande.
(8) On 16 January 1994, President Carlos Salinas de Gortori announced he was going to present to Congress a proposal for an amnesty for those involved in the Zapatista insurrection. On 18 January, in a text that has become famous, Subcommandante Marcos refused, replying: "What have we to be pardoned for?". See *Subcommandante Marcos, Ya basta!*, Dagorno, Paris, 1994.
(9) National Liberation Armed Forces (FALN), People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP), Comando Francisco Villa, Comando Morelos, Comandos Armados Mexicanos, Genaro Vasquez Brigade, Vicente Guerrero Brigade, Workers' Self-defence Brigade, 18 May Brigade, Peasants' Ajusticiamento Brigade, Ricardo-Flores-Magon Workers' Revolutionary Organisation, Communist Cells, Armed Organisation of the People, etc.
(10) A massacre of 45 natives, allegedly Zapatistas, mostly women and children, that took place in Chiapas on 22 December 1997.
(11) Diminutive of *compañeros* (companions or comrades).
(12) There are nevertheless indirect links. The EPR has been joined by EZLN dissidents who disagreed with the line taken by Subcommandante Marcos, in particular the peace talks resumed in 1995.

Collapse of the Russian state

Continued from page 1

the process of adjusting to the modern world. Others were stagnating or on the verge of collapse. The structure as a whole was a patchwork of emerging or declining players moving in different or opposite directions.

At the outbreak of war with Japan in 1904, the Tsarist state was already suffering from all the ills that would eventually cripple it in the run-up to and during the course of the first world war. Incapable of conducting large-scale hostilities, it appointed incompetent generals and civil administrators. The inner circle of the Tsarist court, riddled with intrigue and inherently incapable of picking effective leaders, was the main culprit. Just as debilitating was the monarchy's inability, or refusal, to involve members of the new educated social classes or emerging political parties.

The history of the Duma, from its creation to its "emasculation", shows that the Tsarist state was unwilling to discard the monarchist ideology of the 17th century. It refused to adopt even the most urgent reforms. And the scope of the reforms actually required was well beyond the powers of a sovereign (and a court) who insisted on governing the empire as if it were a vast patrimonial estate.

The monarchy collapsed without a whimper, and there was nothing to take its place. The pattern was to be repeated. In early 1917 all the political forces in turn tried their hand at the task the monarchy had proved incapable of performing. The machinery of state stood for a while, but soon fell into ruin.

The course of events was similar to the "troubles" of the 17th century, when the breakdown of the state apparatus, coupled with social upheaval, was followed by internal conflict and fragmentation, the emergence of national separatist movements, and finally a terrible civil war. Who was to rebuild the state? And how? The issues were the same then as in 1917. The forces arraigned were different — but the task was the same.

From then on, the picture becomes more complicated. Although the civil war, the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1) and the Stalinist period cannot be seen as three distinct types of state, they nevertheless marked three separate stages in state construction. One of them, the NEP, will go down in history as a period of détente. The other two, dominated by ideological mobilisation, will always be seen as tragic and coercive.

The post-Stalinist period saw the elimination of arbitrary mass terror as an instrument of state control. Fear ceased to be a factor in most people's lives. This can appropriately be described as "demobilisation": not only was it like returning from war to civilian life, but the functioning of the regime itself also underwent considerable demilitarisation.

The weakening of dictatorship and terror also reflected numerous social and cultural changes that were specific to educated urban societies. Thus the towns began to overtake the countryside in the late 1960s, and the country as a whole made great progress. But despite this renewed vigour — and the spectacular demonstrations of progress of which the regime was so fond — worrying trends were apparent that seemed to be deeply entrenched. From the early 1970s onward, bottlenecks were forming in all parts of the system. They marked the start of a new slowdown, known in Russian as *zastoy* or stagnation (2), which led to a further period of decline. As the 1970s progressed, the regime no longer had the energy or will to assess the situation, even less remedy it.

The problem was this: a political system created at a specific stage in history, and apparently in the process of moving smoothly to the next stage, suddenly found itself stuck mid-stream. It was caught between two opposing forces, one pulling forward and the other back. All progress was blocked by a huge bureaucratic apparatus that had grown up in the process of industrialisation, but in the heart of a society that was still largely rural.

And although the post-Stalinist regime rapidly achieved urbanisation, Russia still bore the stamp of the agrarian period, and its state system retained many features of the Stalinist model. So when the formative Soviet state got stuck, it was crossing a historical bridge from a world with deep rural roots to an urban industrial, if not post-industrial, society.



TOM STODDART

This period lasted from 1935 to about 1970. The main transformation took place quickly. Whole communities, amounting to millions of people, migrated from villages or small towns to large cities. The bureaucratic apparatus and society as a whole found themselves trapped together on the same stepping stone of history. Just when social change and the the technological and scientific revolution required the state to adapt to the country's internal complexity and to the new international environment, the huge bureaucratic apparatus got hooked on power and its large benefits. It exhibited all the symptoms of entrenchment, unable to abandon the comfort of a ship that was already sinking under its own weight.

When the Brezhnev clique scuppered Kosygin's promising reforms in the second half of the 1960s, government came to a standstill. A strange logic seemed to be at work. The greater the complexity and mobility of Soviet society, and the faster the pace of change, the more the Soviet regime became stultified and incapable of movement.

Although power was supposedly in the hands of a political party, the system itself was becoming depoliticised. In particular, it had become incapable of promoting competent leaders or developing strategies for change. Behind the imposing façade and endless speeches, the Soviet regime had seized up. It fell with surprising ease.

The awaited emancipation did not follow the sudden disintegration of the party and one-party state. Instead, a long decline set in where the state ceased to play any effective role. Just as at the other critical moments of its history, the very foundations of national existence seem to have collapsed. Once again, the most urgent task on Russia's agenda is to revive or recreate the state itself.

After the collapse of the Soviet system, the first step towards recovery should have been to lay down the basis for a new model. Only then should the pace of transition have been stepped up. Solid support for the private, co-operative and mixed sectors would have encouraged small state-owned factories and export-oriented enterprises of all sizes to seek private partners. That would have created systems for procuring capital goods to replace the rigid state distribution bodies.

Large state enterprises would have had no choice but to engage with the market and look for partners, both at home and abroad. Those with an essential role to play and strong enough to carry on could have remained in the state's hands. These measures would also have helped political organisations and new institutions to emerge and promoted a strong, properly adapted legal framework.

Instead of which, a war to the finish was declared against the state-owned economy. In record time, under cover of a counter-ideology ignorant of the realities of the previous system, the country's riches were sold off at knock-down prices in pursuit of a miracle cure known as the "free market". But the so-called reformers forgot or underestimated one simple fact: Western techniques of market regulation cannot work until a functioning market economy exists.

Without a legal framework and independent judicial apparatus, gangrene spread quickly throughout a state economy in the throes of a privatisation process dominated by organised crime. Supported by Western advisers and extolled by the West's most influential governments and economic institutions, "privatisation" amounted to highway robbery of epic proportions. Specialists are still struggling to come to terms with the figures involved.

It is symptomatic that as the economy declined, capital flows in and out of Moscow were vastly greater than those of other financial centres. An operation of such proportions would have been impossible without collusion between large-scale currency smugglers and key sectors of the state apparatus, based on "gentlemen's agreements" that were highly lucrative for both sides. This is proved beyond doubt by the fact that the institutions responsible for this unprecedented plunder were infiltrated by a mafia-like criminal network making systematic use of blackmail and hitmen.

The so-called economic boom largely consisted in the proliferation of banks whose main purpose was to transfer enormous sums of money abroad. Naive or biased observers took these developments as a sign of good health, even though the country's economy and industrial base were growing weaker by the day and the standard of living was falling sharply. The simultaneous existence of prosperous banks and an economy drifting out of control was a sure sign of impending bankruptcy, but well-meaning Western advisers continued to press the government of the "reformers" to engage in yet more reforms.

The incredible short-sightedness of this approach is dumbfounding. It was readily interpreted by large numbers of Russians as proof that the aim of Western policy was to turn Russia into a dumping ground. Sadly, that is exactly how things are turning out.

In the absence of properly structured parties and influential leaders with alternative programmes, the Yeltsin regime has established itself as the new centre of the state and pursues its chosen course unimpeded by political or judicial bodies that carry real weight. The privatisation of state assets rapidly gave rise to vast fortunes whose owners now wield considerable power. This in turn led to virtual privatisation of the government itself.

Although the institutions in place more or less resemble the government of a state, they are in fact presiding over a growing political and economic vacuum. Russia is losing its substance. A nation in which the state has historically played a powerful, sometimes all-powerful, role now finds itself practically without any state structure at all. Laws no longer exist or are openly flouted. The judicial system is impotent. The military forces resemble a beggars' army. The police act like gangsters. Some regions have virtually seceded. The governors of the larger regions are bribed by the president and negotiate special privileges for themselves in exchange for political support. Wages are no longer paid. Nor are taxes. Ordinary people are increasingly dependent on barter and the food they can grow.

Such is the result of the "reforms" that have stripped Russia of its state and its economy. The social consequences are terrible. A large part of the population now lives below the poverty line. Old-age pensioners are dying of starvation. Life expectancy, especially for men, is falling dangerously. The educated middle classes are struggling to survive.

The crisis is systemic. It embraces everything, from the government and its policy to the moral and cultural substance of society. No adequate remedy can be found or begin to be applied until Russia possesses a government able to act. But that is just a necessary precondition. Much more is needed. No economy can develop or function without a viable state, meaning not only the state apparatus as such, but the whole political system.

A political system capable of practising democracy needs a whole range of social, cultural and political institutions, of which an effective opposition, comprising powerful trade unions, political parties, churches, etc, is an essential element. Only such institutions can provide the binding force of legitimacy.

Another vital ingredient, closely connected with legitimacy, is political culture — the ability of ordinary citizens to understand the functioning and problems of the administration, to choose and support political leaders and monitor their behaviour. This assumes that citizens have a degree of confidence in the system; that voters and their elected representatives basically agree on a code of ethics and that governors and governed share a set of principles and ideals. Such are the necessary components of any political system. Their lack gives some measure of the crisis from which Russia is suffering.

Honest government

AFTER protracted negotiations, agreement was reached between the Duma and President Yeltsin to appoint the former minister of foreign affairs, Yevgeny Primakov, as prime minister. Mr Primakov is a member of a category of apparatchiks known as *gosudarstvenniki*. Many of these professional civil servants occupied senior positions in the Soviet era but had no real control over the events. They were known for their efficiency and are free from any suspicion of corruption.

The formation in Moscow of a government that is — we have reason to hope — honest and at least minimally efficient is a crucial step forward. But the state apparatus is only one part of a much larger political system that no Russian government can summon into being with a snap of the fingers.

The health of the Russian state is of major concern, but another great historical handicap must also be borne in mind. Whenever state power vacillates in Russia, when it needs to be restored in one form or other, the old demons reappear, hovering over the political arena like vultures. Statist fundamentalists clamour for a return to a state-controlled society, an authoritarian system with a built-in tendency to dictatorship that leads inevitably to debilitating bureaucratisation. It is, they claim, the only model of society the Russian people have ever been willing to accept or able to understand. An apathetic society is a fertile breeding ground for those whose only programme is a "strong hand" to restore order in Mother Russia. The sort of order that would spell the final collapse of the country and plunge it into the "fourth world".

As the country falls to pieces around him, Mr Yeltsin has been casting about for a great idea to rally the nation. There were calls to restore the monarchy, but that idea was soon dropped. In any case, it would have been more like exhumation than restoration. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, overwhelmed by the extent of the crisis and the suffering on all sides, looks to the Orthodox faith to turn the Russians into patriots. But at the same time he describes the Orthodox Church as irreparably corrupted by a chronic inability to act.

Communism, too, no longer has a church worthy of the name. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) is its only serious political force, but it takes good care not to advocate a communist programme. The

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Under cover of a counter-ideology ignorant of the realities of the previous system, the country's riches were sold off at knock-down prices in pursuit of a miracle cure known as the 'free market'

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party even considered changing its name but — with opinion polls showing widespread nostalgia for the Brezhnev era — the change would have cost it too many votes. The CPRF is to the left of Mr Yeltsin, but it is not a left-wing party. It is essentially a nationalist-statist organisation that seeks to rehabilitate many bitterly criticised aspects of the Soviet past but does not advocate a return to a fully state-run society or even a one-party system. It talks vaguely of "restoring" the Soviet Union, but that is clearly not its first priority.

There is no lack of great ideas bandied about in Russia, but a unifying national concept cannot be dreamed up by specialists in propaganda or public relations. National identity, patriotism, national characteristics and culture are organic products of historical development, emerging from the interplay of conflicting trends inside and outside the country. The new national anthem was selected by a committee set up by the president, following a national competition. The fact that the winning entry has no words is spectacular proof that the emperor has no clothes and that his thieves' kitchen of a regime is incapable of rallying and leading the country.

It would be foolhardy to attempt to predict how a new upsurge might originate. But it should not be ruled out. A credible improvement in the performance of the central government, a promising provincial experiment that could serve as a model, a stiffening of the sinews by reliable, honest politicians that would encourage people to get involved in the political process, might be enough to start the ball rolling.

During perestroika the enthusiasm and willingness to learn, which the initial electoral experiments of the period aroused in large sectors of society, dispose of the notion that the Russian people is inherently incapable of making democracy work. But these positive developments were buried under the rubble of the forced transition to the "market". For the time being, there is widespread apathy and little cause for optimism. The fact that politics has no attraction for young people is in itself an alarming symptom. Hostility to democracy, which put paid to the emerging political activism, is primarily a reaction to a crisis brought about by policies that claim to epitomise it. But widespread participation in politics is absolutely necessary if Russia is finally to lay its old demons to rest.

That they have reared their heads is eloquent proof of the burden of history. The main problem is the disparity between the tasks to be done and the means deployed to accomplish them.

When the state gets out of control, it fails to perform its vital role as a regulator. Instead, it becomes a burden or a parasite. Once the trend to an overblown bureaucracy sets in, all sorts of barriers to development arise, and underdevelopment becomes a real prospect.

To an historian, it appears as if we are watching the latest remake of an old Russian classic. The forms are new each time, of course. But the country is still struggling under the same burden.

Once again an energetic Russian state intent on modernising the country has turned into a parasitic excrescence. The overblown, dilapidated centre has finally admitted defeat and collapsed under its own weight, like the Tsarist regime of old. Despite many predictions to the contrary, it was not the periphery that finished off the centre, but the collapse of the centre that signalled to the nomenklatura in the national republics that they could now proclaim their independence.

After so much effort and colossal expenditure, Russia seems once again to have missed the boat. As the collapse continues, all eyes are on the new government. Will it be able to reverse the trend?

Translated by Barry Smerin

(1) In 1921, at the end of the civil war, Lenin abandoned "war communism" and advocated a partial return to a market economy. The aim of the "new economic policy", as it was called, was to rebuild Russia's industrial infrastructure and improve the standard of living of the peasants, industrial workers and middle classes. It relied massively on the expertise of administrators and technicians trained under the ancien régime. By 1927 the Soviet Union had achieved the level of production of pre-war Russia.

(2) It was in the Gorbachev years that the Brezhnev period came to be referred to as a "period of stagnation".

WRITERS STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

Russia's intellectuals all at sea

Leo Tolstoy, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Maxim Gorky, Ilya Ehrenburg, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov ... Throughout Russia's history, from the last days of the Tsars to the end of communism, via the October Revolution and Stalinism, intellectuals have raised their voices and influenced the course of events. This makes their silence since the fall of the Soviet Union all the more deafening. Their reticence is explained in part by the drop in living standards but also by a historic distrust of politicians. But there are signs of a reawakening.

BY CLAUDE FRIOUX

THE SAYING goes that in Russia a poet is always more than a poet. Tolstoy was one of the few voices able to speak out when times got rough. The greatest challenges to the ideological conformity of the Soviet period came from poets and novelists such as Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Russia took the path of *perestroika* with the help of a group of writers and critics based around the journal *Novy Mir*. Such writers as Vladimir Dudintsev, Boris Mozhaev, Vassily Grossman and Andrei Sinyavsky helped convey the dramas of Stalinism to the outside world through an epic production of more or less clandestine writings.

Mikhail Gorbachev tried to harness this critical potential by appointing key literary figures to run the major journals and bringing them en masse into the first Duma. Gorbachev calculated that having this élite on his side would help him create a state based on human rights. But he reckoned without the rising tide of nationalism.

Boris Yeltsin's rising star attracted a number of intellectuals irritated by Gorbachev's dithering. A blast of Greater Russia nationalism saw mistrust of the other nations of the former Soviet Union, the return of the personality cult, hysterical anti-communism among parts of the intelligentsia and a radical conversion to ultra-liberalism with its promise of prosperity just around the corner.

The aura that Yeltsin created around him at the time of the 1991 putsch — the after-effects of which are still being felt today — muffled the shock of the killings at the "White House" in 1993 and the sweeping presidential power that was its outcome. Leading dissidents such as Andrei Sinyavsky and Vladimir Maximov called on Tsar Boris to see the error of his ways and repent. But equally well-known figures — Bela Akhmadulina, Dmitri Likhachev and Bulat Okuzhava among them — were calling for drastic steps to be taken against the communists in a rhetoric worthy of the worst excesses of the late 1930s.

In short, Russia's intellectuals, particularly its writers, were behaving disconcertingly. As the country sank into poverty, its intellectuals looked for ways to make up for their old privileges. They appeared to have a blind faith in the free market economy and its potential benefits for the world of culture. Now that Russia was coming back into fashion, they could enjoy foreign trips, sign juicy contracts, travel like stars, open bank accounts in Paris and Munich, and feel themselves on an equal footing with Europe's élites.

The artistic and literary world began to ape the manners of Europe and America. Glitzy launches of new books — black-tie affairs with cocktails, champagne and evening dress — turned the heads of Russia's literary circles. It was an idyllic interlude which bolstered Yeltsin's image, even if there were reservations about the greed and coarseness of his entourage. It was almost like the bad old days of the Stalinist personality cult. People went back to the Soviet habit of not asking questions. Tsar Boris was working wonders. He kept the shops well-stocked and the communists at bay.

It has led to a rude awakening. Russia's brand image is disintegrating as a result of government chaos and the sorry state of culture. Foreign publishers are losing interest in Russian writers, and, in Russia itself, the semi-state system of publishing is being cheerfully blown to bits and its component parts snapped up by a myriad of former employees, who are now catering to a market sold on thrillers and pornography.

Serious publishing still exists, but it is a fraction of what it was in Soviet days. The print runs of top publishers have dropped from millions to just a few thousand. Famous bookshops have been turned into clothes shops and almost all the cinemas are now casinos. The intelligentsia, who had lived well under socialism, even if it was a bit of a gilded cage, are now finding that the gilt has gone.

Russian artists and intellectuals, who were once able to view Europe from the comfort of their dollar accounts, now have to beg for invitations, contracts, airline tickets. The iron curtain has been replaced by one of silver — made worse by the collapse of the economy. It is more demoralising than the poverty of the Soviet era because people are no longer spared the sudden wave of redundancies.

Russia's intellectuals are now absorbed by questions of material survival, confused about how to deal with the mafia face of power. The excesses of both the Soviet system and its successor, market-economy liberalism, have made them avoid anything that smacks of politics. Somewhere in their hearts they still harbour a contempt for politicians — a cultural hangover from the Soviet era. Russia may face a whole range of desperate problems, but the intellectuals have nothing to say. The luckier ones spend their time between two homes — one in Russia and one abroad — while the rest sit waiting for some charitable soul to make them an offer.

Making ends meet

INTELLECTUALS are no longer the small islands of lucid dignity they once were, but rather an amorphous mass marked by a cynical lack of concern and a total absorption in the business of making ends meet. There is not the grandeur of Tolstoy's reply to Yasnaya Polyana. The last major political voice to be heard was that of Sinyavsky (1), who described Yeltsin as the worst of all choices.

In the dachas to which they repair while they rent their city apartments to foreigners, the talk is all flower beds, pets and parapsychology. No one stops to ask how it was they managed to misjudge Yeltsin or wonder what kind of umpteenth Russian miracle is going to preserve their fancy shops — without a state, an economy or a currency worthy of their names.

The intelligentsia have been drowning their consciences in works of total blackness inspired by the realities of present-day Russia — as in the recent films of Kira Muratova. The poet Andrei Voznesensky is one of the rare figures to have made the transition with dignity and talent, combining a search for new forms, a dramatic sense of present realities and independence of judgment with a deftness that has earned him an enduring success. Among the active opposition, the only clear-sighted presence to be found is among the nationalists (Vasili Belov and Valentin Rasputin with their journal *Our Contemporary*).

Nikita Milkhalkov, building on a prolific output plus his reputation and opportunism, has been campaigning in the world of cinema. Milkhalkov is known for his authoritarian leanings, so it is no surprise to find him proposing something akin to the old Union of Film-Makers, with substantial state backing to prevent Russian film-making disappearing entirely.

There is now some quiet resistance to this sad state of affairs. What is left of the weekly and monthly literary press — a traditional bedrock of 20th century Russian culture — is trying to move into the world of publishing, like the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. There are also proper publishing ventures, such as Vagrius, which are trying to publish good-quality work even though their print runs are tiny and their distribution networks virtually non-existent.

In the words of Georges Nivat (2), one face of the "Russian myth" is collapsing. As a result of fatigue, disenchantment and an inability to adapt, intellectuals are no longer functioning as the country's conscience. But there are positive developments too. To start with, the liberalisation of the press, and with it a new breed of journalists. Both in the traditional press (*Izvestia* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda*) and in more recent arrivals (*Nezavissimaya Gazeta* and *Kommersant*), a number of remarkable journalists have been emerging. Despite being carved up by three or four huge banking consortia, the Russian press is exceptional for its quality, its pertinence (and impertinence), its relative independence and its brilliance of expression.

It has courage and the flair of intellectual commitment. Witness its investigation of a series of spectacular assassinations, in particular that of Vladislav Listyev. A columnist such as Vitali Tretyakov has the dimension, the following and the professionalism of the best of today's writers. For a long time the Russian press has been recounting the financial maelstrom which the rest of us only read about later. Too bad it is rarely read abroad.

Then there is the Russian political class, which is usually written off as uncouth and corrupt. Even if this is often so, it has many intellectuals of note. There is Anatoli Sobchak, dean of the Leningrad University law faculty — a high-flyer unfortunately on the run for embezzlement. There are economists and political thinkers of courage and talent. There is also Grigori Yavlinsky, a key figure in the parliamentary centre left; and the new prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov, a polyglot orientalist, shrewd diplomat and professor of political science. What Russia's political establishment suffers from is a weariness of government involvement with big business.

Until President Clinton appeared to change his mind, there was the much-touted myth that only Yeltsin stood in the way of chaos — rather than being its chief cause. Since then, some alternatives have appeared. Part of the intelligentsia is capable of picking up the baton, in terms of running the state, and has the merit of being free of a dogmatic liberalism that has become more anachronistic than all the *diamats* (3) put together.

The entry of intellectuals into the world of politics through channels other than the camps or the underground press is a major event which the present whirlwind of events should not obscure. It has sent the profiteers of the Yeltsin era packing. Perhaps it will prove capable of drawing on its resources to deal with the crises of the contemporary world. But people must stop treating it with a clumsy cynicism that risks provoking a frightening backlash of xenophobia.

Translated by Ed Emery

Claude Frioux is professor at the University of Paris-VIII, and author of several books on Russia and editor of L'URSS et nous, Editions Sociales, Paris, 1978.

(1) Andrei Sinyavsky and his friend, the poet and translator Yuli Daniel, were respectively sentenced to seven and five years in the camps in 1966 for having illegally published works abroad which "vilified the regime and undermined the power of the Soviet state". This verdict mobilised intellectuals all over the world, including the writer Louis Aragon, through whose voice the French Communist Party began, for the first time, to distance itself from the repression of dissidents in the Soviet Union.

(2) Co-author of the *Histoire de la littérature Russe*, 5 vols., Fayard, Paris 1987.

(3) Short for "dialectical materialism".

ETHNIC PROBLEMS PROMPT EXTREME SOLUTIONS

Divide and rule in Burma

To give it a more acceptable face, Burma's military government has renamed its governing body: the State Law and Order Council (Slorc) has become the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). But the regime remains as dictatorial as ever, refusing to make any concessions to the National League for Democracy, and its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. The ethnic minorities are still faced with the choice of repression or surrender. If they opt for surrender, some of their warlords are given a free hand to carry on their lucrative drug trafficking activities.

BY ANDRÉ AND LOUIS BOUCAUD

THERE are empty and abandoned villages, sometimes looted and burned, with the bodies of women and children lying around. The army has killed hundreds, shooting on sight anyone who strays off the track, refuses to obey or does not leave their village quickly enough. Others have died of hunger, disease or exhaustion on the road or in the camps. To stamp out resistance by armed Shan nationalist groups supported by the oppressed local population, Burma's military government has launched a huge scorched earth operation in Shan State.

The enforced round-ups have been going on for more than two years. They are turning the centre of the country into a human desert through what is becoming a systematic massacre. There is now a huge area emptied of human habitation, extending from the town of Mong Hsu in the north to the Thai border in the south, from the Salween valley in the east to the town of Taung-gyi in the north-west.

Three hundred thousand Shan have been driven from their villages and herded together on three or four sites in each district, with no possibility of growing anything on the land and no help. Non-governmental organisations such as the Burma Relief Center and the Shan Human Right Foundation, which have teams working clandestinely in Shan State, condemn the Thais for not speaking out when they are well aware of the situation.

The Shan resistance is much more recent than that of the Karen *(see box, below)*. The unrest started in 1958, after the central government refused to honour agreements giving Shan State the chance to secede. The Panglong agreements, as they were known, were signed with General Aung San in 1947 shortly before his assassination (1).

Over the past 30 years the Shan movements have multiplied and divided. By the late 1980s their position was very weak and one group signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese junta. Others rallied to the drug baron Khun Sa, then at the height of his power. When he suddenly surrendered in January 1996, his powerful army collapsed and ultra-nationalist Shan officers, refusing to surrender, regrouped in armed movements.

Despite the junta's current clean-up operations, reminiscent of ethnic cleansing, guerrillas in the Shan State Army (SSA) are evading the round-ups, harassing the patrols and convoys, striking and disappearing. The bus between Taung-gyi, Kengtung and Tachileck now has to travel in convoy with a military escort, and the journey time has increased from five to eight days.

Although ethnic feeling runs high, support for the rebels appears to have waned and the people are weary and demoralised. Even so, they are firmly opposed to the junta, and some Shan are not afraid to criticise the military government out loud in the teashops.

The growing Chinese presence in Shan State, especially the large towns, has exacerbated nationalist sensibilities. Their economic influence is in evidence from Lashio to Mandalay, and from Kengtung to Taung-gyi. The local people see Chinese from Yunnan taking over the best land, controlling trade, and securing mining concessions and the latest teak plantations. The poorer sections of the population particularly resent the opportunistic Chinese, who make a fast buck by colluding with corrupt officers of the Burmese regime. In the regional capital, Kengtung, there is frantic development going on in the residential district near the airport where high-ranking army officers live. The luxury villas being built for the Chinese businessmen are in sharp contrast to the old colonial red brick buildings in the rest of the town.

Mong La, a village on the Chinese border about 100 kilometres east of Kengtung, used to be controlled by communist rebels. Since the ceasefire agreements the region has been ruled by the warlord Lin Min Shin, alias Sai Lin, a former military leader in the Burmese Communist Party (BCP). His almost 2,000-strong army, the Eastern Shan State Army (ESSA), controls the east of the state along the Chinese and Laotian borders, the area the BCP used to call Division 815. Sai Lin has become one of the most powerful drug barons and has been on the list in the US State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report since March 1998. He also has close links with General Khin Nyunt, one of the four leaders of the former Slorc, and now head of the government's intelligence services in its successor, the SPDC.

Sai Lin's heroin trafficking activities have become so blatant that the Chinese authorities are worried. Drug addiction and Aids are increasing at an alarming rate in Yunnan. In response to Chinese pressure, General Khin Nyunt has persuaded Sai Lin to keep a lower profile. What used to be Division 815 has been renamed Special Region No 4 and — to meet China's demands and deceive the international organisations (the substitution schemes are financed from the United Nations's International Drug Control Programme, UNDCP) — it has been declared an "opium-free zone". Poppy fields can no longer be seen along the road to Mong La; but it is hard to believe that 45,000 hectares of poppies have disappeared within a few months.

For good measure, an opium museum has been opened in Mong La, at the foot of two hills, where an enormous Buddhist pagoda and a Christian church have been built. For someone who used to be a communist cadre and Red Guard, Sai Lin is not lacking in humour. The museum's inauguration by General Khin Nyunt in March last year was attended by a Chinese delegation and diplomats flown in from Kengtung by helicopter.

In a marathon speech, General Khin Nyunt paid tribute to Sai Lin's anti-drug campaign and promotion of economic development in Mong La. He pointed out that the town had electricity 24 hours a day, comparing it with Kengtung, where there is power only during the night. In reality, the schools and dispensaries he talked about fall far short of fulfilling the needs of the people, and the roads and hydroelectric power stations built by Chinese companies are certainly not for the benefit of the local population.

Mong La is also being promoted as a tourist destination, with 500,000 Chinese visitors expected annually. Their real reasons for coming were not mentioned. The old village dating from the communist era, with its brick and wooden houses, has become the centre of a kind of free zone where anything goes. The Shan and Wa mountain peoples' straw huts on piles still survive on the outskirts, but the centre boasts a Chinese bank with a marble façade, a luxury hotel and countless nightclubs full of girls.

A four-lane avenue lined with street lamps leads to the two star attractions which General Khin Nyunt failed to mention in his speech — the transvestite theatre and the lavish casino, with its split-level green-carpeted rooms, its uniformed croupiers and 200 shiny slot machines. Girls, transvestites and gambling — that is the reality of the economic development that is pulling in the Chinese tourists.

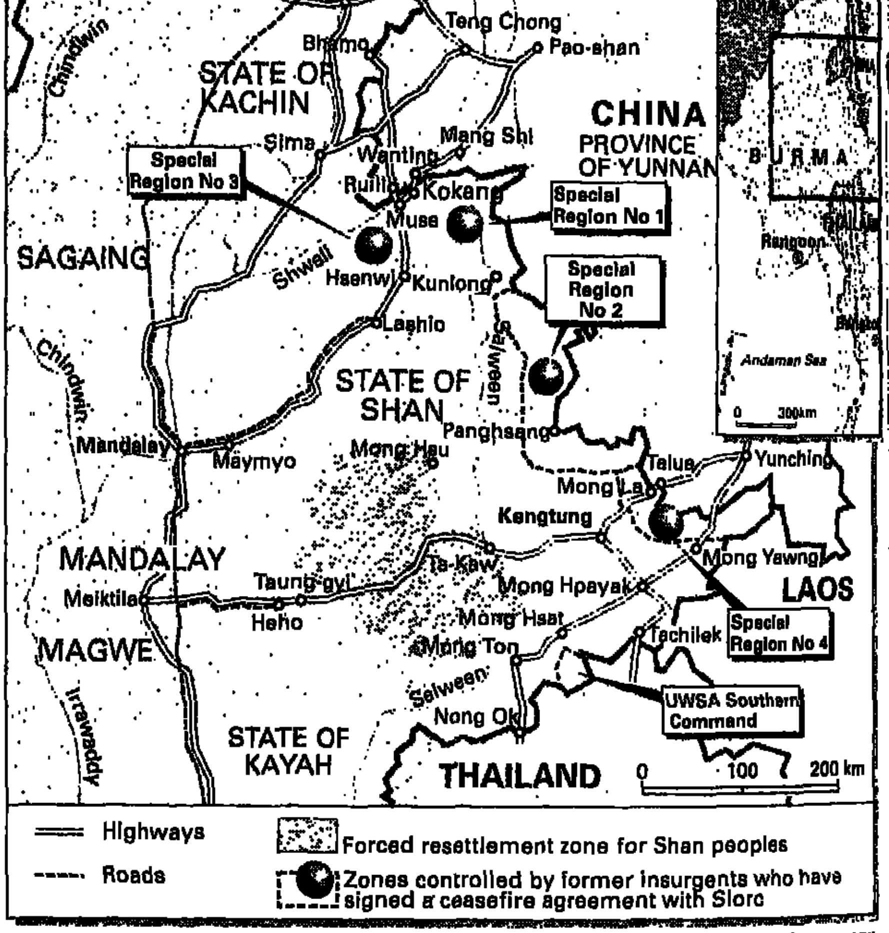
Mong La, open to the Yunnan Chinese who come in from Jinghong and Kunming, is becoming a Chinese city. The staff at the casino, bank, hotel, restaurants, dance-halls and theatre, as well as the prostitutes, are all Chinese. Burmese kyats are no use; the only currency accepted is the Chinese yuan.

So Mong La has become the showcase of a drug baron who has officially retired. But local sources deny he has given up heroin trafficking, and he is believed to be the biggest producer of amphetamines in Burma — with the casino as an ideal place to launder money. But as far as the government is concerned, Sai Lin is an ex-rebel who has come over to their side and is investing in the country's development. In exchange, he has kept his local autonomy. But that will not last for ever. The leaders of the SPDC know it — especially as Sai Lin suffered a heart attack in December last year. They are biding their time until they can take control of the territory again.

The government recently regained control of Kokang, designated Special Region No 1. In 1989 the Kokang clan chiefs, ex-members of the BCP, were persuaded by a former drug baron, Lo Hsing Han, to support the Slorc. Realising that it was better to keep a low pro-

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André and Louis Boucaud are journalists



CÉCILE MARIN

Ethnic minority's 50-year fight for freedom

ON 14 April this year the peace of Myawaddy, a Burmese village close to the Thai border, was abruptly shattered by mortar explosions and bursts of fire from automatic weapons. After setting fire to a few stalls and vehicles in the marketplace, the attackers vanished into the jungle as suddenly as they had appeared.

This commando raid by the Karen National Union (KNU) was perhaps the final stage in a revolt against the central government that has been going on for the past 50 years. The only response from Burma's military government has been a demand for unconditional surrender.

The Karen are one of the many ethnic minorities fighting against the dominant Burmese since the country became independent. In the past they spearheaded and encouraged uprisings by other ethnic minorities defending their identity.

First, the Mon, Karen and Pao, then the Shan and Kashin in turn took up arms. Other minorities such as the Wa and Kokanai allied themselves with the powerful Burmese Communist Party when it took refuge in the areas along the Chinese border.

Since 1989 General Khin Nyunt has been putting considerable pressure on the warring ethnic minorities in an attempt to make them sign ceasefire agreements, the first stage in the military dictatorship's policy of forcibly assimilating the minorities.

It aims to do this either by means of brutal repression or by allowing the ethnic leaders a certain amount of autonomy in exchange for ceasefire agreements.

The ultimate goal is the total surrender of the armed groups and the creation of autonomous areas renamed Special Regions, in which all ethnic identities are eliminated.

Only a handful of KNU Karen are still resisting and 110,000 Karen refugees are now living in camps in Thailand.

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file, they opened their territory up to the junta's army, and their armed group, the Myanmar Democratic Alliance Army, surrendered its weapons. They have become part of Burma again and they, too, claim they are no longer involved with drugs.

But other ex-BCP members, the Wa in the United Wa State Army (UWSA), accuse them of surrendering to the government in exchange for the freedom to continue trafficking — and what's more, in collaboration with Lo Hsing Han. They also appear on the list of drug barons in the US State Department report. Kokang still supplies heroin and amphetamines on a massive scale, and it was there that synthetic drugs such as Ecstasy were first produced in Burma.

The UWSA leader Pao Yo Chang, alias Ta Pang, with his 15,000-strong army, has rejected the SPDC's offers. At the moment, the Wa are not prepared to compromise on territory. But their Achilles heel is the military enclave they control along the Thai border under another drug baron, Wei Shao Kang, who is wanted in the US. The SPDC is urging Wei Shao Kang to surrender his territory and accept the same status as Khun Sa, but for financial and strategic reasons the Wa leaders in Panghsang are refusing.

Caught between pressure from Burma and opposition from the UWSA leaders, Wei Shao Kang has sparked off a bloody conflict between the pro- and anti-SPDC factions (2). Although he has links with both the SPDC and Thai leaders, he is on the defensive. The fact that his "minor wife" (second and non-legal) is related to General Chaovalit, a former Thai prime minister, no longer seems enough to protect him. However, he has certainly not given up heroin trafficking — a kilo sells at 230,000 bahts (3) on the border — and he has also gone into the amphetamine trade. Amphetamines are easier to manufacture and can be sold in Thailand at a 300% net profit.

The SPDC claims to be encouraging "voluntary retirement" from trafficking and is offering the major traffickers immunity if they invest in infrastructure development, as has happened in Mong La. The authorities say they are stepping up their anti-drug campaign and destroying more of the poppy fields. These claims are contradicted by Kashin, Shan and Wa leaders in the regions concerned. A few substitution schemes have been tried in the pilot zones, but the peasant farmers, driven out by repression and poverty, go and plant further away in more isolated areas.

This year the US again included Burma on its list of uncertified countries (4). According to diplomatic sources, the Americans are giving the SPDC some credit for their efforts, going along with Burmese propaganda by drawing attention to even the slightest positive sign. This is presumably due to the influence of powerful American firms of lobbyists such as Jefferson Waterman International, owned by Ann Wrobleski, who used to work in the government narcotics control agency. According to the *Washington Post* on 24 February, 1998, Jefferson Waterman International received $500,000 for its campaign from the Burmese company Myanmar Development Ltd, which has links to the junta.

But the US State Department takes a very different view. In the report published last March, it accused the Burmese government of protecting and collaborating with the drug barons, and pointed to the poor results of the drug control measures.

The question now is who the US government will listen to: its own State Department or the pro-Burma, anti-sanctions lobby. The dead and dying in the centre of Shan State will probably not feature in the equation at all.

Translated by Lorna Dale

(1) Burmese nationalist leader and father of Aung San Suu Kyi, who negotiated independence with the British.
(2) In the fighting, Sai Pao, the Wa foreign affairs spokesman in Thailand, was assassinated. Wa officers accused Wei Shao Kang of engineering the death of Tin Kwan Ming, a military leader found executed in China.
(3) 100 bahts = approximately $2.50.
(4) Every March the US president "certifies" that certain countries are "co-operating fully" with Washington on reducing drug trafficking. Decertification carries a double penalty: Washington suspends its bilateral aid and takes steps to have aid from other international financial institutions cut or stopped.

A QUIET COUP IN BURMA

Rebranding a regime

The Burmese junta abandoned Slorc under pressure from their fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). This influential group had warned Burma's ruling élite that the country's appalling level of corruption was an obstacle to foreign investment.

ON 15 December, 1997, Burma's military junta changed its name. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) which had run the country since 1988 was replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The change of name, accompanied by a few changes in the ruling team, was the ratification of a quiet coup within the government.

Unlike the 1988 changes which were brought about by street demonstrations (1), this palace revolution was indirectly prompted by outside pressure. Although it was achieved without bloodshed, it led to the arrest of some of the leading figures behind the creation of the Slorc. There were various reasons for the change. Burma is trying to restore its international reputation by "rebranding" the regime and at the same time combatting the serious unrest in the country.

Burma has not been immune to the Southeast Asian crisis and its immediate financial consequences. Although the official rate for the kyat is still quoted at around six to the dollar, its black-market value has dropped from 150 to about 300 kyats to the dollar.

In September last year Burma's former dictator, the still powerful General Ne Win, went to Indonesia to meet General Suharto, who had been facing economic turmoil in his own country (2). At the meeting, the Indonesian president complained to the general that the deplorable level of corruption in Burma was causing problems for foreign investors — his own family in particular.

The Suhartos have substantial investments in Burma. On an official visit in February last year, Mr Suharto signed a co-operation agreement for the Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada company specialising in the construction of toll roads, run by his eldest daughter Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana (known as Tutut). Most of the cars imported into Burma are manufactured by Astra International, controlled by the Nusamba group in which Mr Suharto owns 80% of the shares. It has exclusive distribution rights for BMWs and Land Rovers in Burma, through the Myanmar Astra Chinte Motor joint venture. The general's second son, Bambany Trihatmojo, has invested in telephones through his company Electrindo Nusantara. His youngest son Hutoma Mandalaputra Suharto, known as Tommy, exports drilling equipment and used to run Sempati Air linking Rangoon and Jakarta until the crisis in Indonesia forced it to close in June 1998.

Ne Win did not just have to put up with criticism from one of his main allies in Asean (3), he was forced to act by the closely linked interests of the two governments. The Singapore business community was equally critical, complaining that every project needed to be approved by several ministers and each minister demanded his share.

Immediately after his return home, Ne Win summoned his "private cabinet" of four of the leading figures in the Slorc, Generals Khin Nyunt, Maung Aye, Than Shwe and Tin Oo. Although not officially a member of the government, Ne Win was still highly influential in shaping its policies. He ordered the removal of the generals in the government who had amassed fortunes worth millions of dollars.

He also ordered the two rival generals, Khin Nyunt and Maung Aye, to confine themselves to their own fields of responsibility: in Khin Nyun's case, keeping the country under control with his intelligence services, and in Maung Aye's case, using the army to ensure stability. Than Shwe's only role was to maintain a balance between the two factions. But in Burmese opposition circles this was seen as a turning point in the power struggle, a clear sign that Khin Nyunt was returning to power with Ne Win's backing.

According to the exiled opposition leader, Doctor Sein Win, it is not so easy to divide power between two clans. The arrested generals, Tun Kyi, Kyaw Ba, Myo Nyunt, Miynt Aung, Thein Win and Sein Aung, also had their clans and spheres of influence. Meanwhile Than Shwe continues to play his own game, exploiting the rivalry between Khin Nyun and Maung Aye.

The generals newly promoted to ministerial positions, but who are not members of the SPDC, are known to support Khin Nyun, confirming the view that his opposite number, Maung Aye, is being undermined. Twelve of the SPDC's 19 members are heads of military regions. These regional commanders have enormous power and sufficient autonomy that they can often ignore orders from Rangoon. Two of the Slorc generals placed under house arrest, the former trade minister, Tun Kyi, and Kyaw Ba, the ex-minister for hotels and tourism, defied Rangoon and the Slorc leaders when they were based in Mandalay and Myitkina. Locally the regional commanders are seen as on a par with warlords.

The internal purge was designed to intimidate the high-ranking army officers. At the same time Khin Nyunt will be able to keep a closer eye on the regional commanders by bringing them into the SPDC. The direction taken in the future by the new junta will depend on the alliances formed by these generals. Nearly half the regional commanders now support Khin Nyunt or are neutral, though it has never been taken for granted in Burma that officers are subject to a clan.

Presumably that explains Khin Nyunt's cautious approach to the change of team. His department should have carried out the arrests but he was shrewd enough to stay out of the picture, handing the responsibility over to retired Tin Oo (not to be confused with the SPDC second secretary of the same name). After the North Korean attack in 1983 Ne Win blamed Tin, who was Khin Nyun's predecessor and former superior as intelligence service chief, for his department's failures, and he was removed from office (4).

Apart from the changes in the hierarchy, the SPDC is still pursuing the same policies as Slorc, refusing dialogue with the opposition and continuing to keep Aung San Suu Kyi in virtual isolation with the aim of destroying her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). The dictatorship is planning to hold elections next March and it needs to engineer internal divisions in the NLD and remove its symbolic leader from the picture — gently, if possible, to avoid a storm of international protest. The best way to achieve this would be for her to be sidelined by her own party.

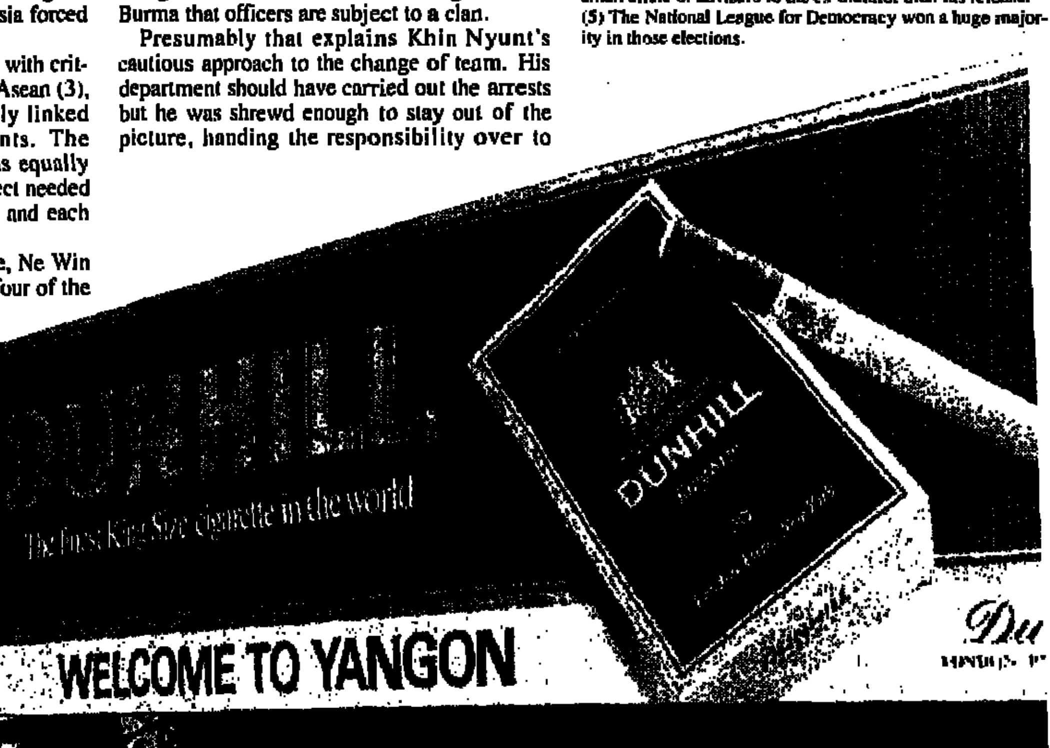
The government's efforts to undermine the opposition and the brutal campaign of executions and imprisonments are beginning to have an effect. Many of the militants are ready to compromise and even co-operate with the SPDC. They are tired and their resistance has been worn down by the hardships of daily life, made worse by the economic crisis. Ms Suu Kyi herself has been ill for some time and is now in poor shape physically and mentally.

Many Burmese want to see a dialogue with the military. They have criticised the NLD leader for being uncompromising and want her to change her stance. Even so, she is still enormously popular, especially in the rural areas. People in the towns believe their situation would be improved if the economic sanctions that Ms Suu Kyi supports were lifted. They are depriving the country of a small amount of aid which only affects ordinary civilians.

But if the forthcoming elections do take place, everything will depend on how effective the army is in controlling the polls. Free elections as in 1990 (5) would almost certainly guarantee victory for the NLD. The people might not wholeheartedly support Mrs Suu Kyi, but they totally reject the military government and the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA), a mass organisation controlled by the army. — ***A&LB***

Translated by Lorna Dale

(1) Demonstrations for democracy ousted the ex-dictator General Ne Win from the prominent position he had occupied since the 1962 coup.
(2) See Françoise Cayrac-Blanchard, "Faillite fracassante pour la dictature indonésienne", *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 1998.
(3) André and Louis Boucaud, "Reconnaissance régionale pour la junte birmane", *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 1997.
(4) General Tin Oo, despite being seen as Ne Win's political heir, was sent to prison for corruption. He rejoined the small circle of advisers to the ex-dictator after his release.
(5) The National League for Democracy won a huge majority in those elections.



HOWARD J DAVIES

US PRESS OBSESSED WITH LOCAL ISSUES

Myopic and cheapskate journalism

Already under fire for its obsessive treatment of President Clinton's sexual improprieties, American journalism has been shaken this year by a number of scandals which cast doubt on the professionalism of some of the country's major news media. Invented stories, plagiarism and testimonies obtained under pressure come high on the list. However, what is more fundamentally at issue is the whole money-making ethos of news journalism nowadays. A journalism which succeeds because it is easier and more profitable, which entertains rather than informs, and which chooses to ignore the international dimension of news.

BY SERGE HALIMI

TEN YEARS after Francis Fukuyama speculated about "the end of history", American journalists are becoming increasingly alarmed at the possibility of an "end of news". It appears that consumers of the world's news are being turned off by an overdose of excessively superficial coverage of a world which offers them only powerlessness and frustration. They are giving up news. It is not the case that the world's press is collapsing, but in more than two thirds of the world it is definitely in decline (1). Subscriptions are not being renewed, and young people's interest in the news has fallen to disastrously low levels.

The reasons for this disaffection are multiple, but we could begin with the sickly and abstracted state of a journalism that is going fast downhill "as mainstream press and TV News outlets purvey more 'lifestyle' stories, trivia, scandal, celebrity gossip, sensational crime, sex in high places and tabloidism at the expense of serious news in a cynical effort to maximise readership and viewership; as editors collude ever more willingly with marketers, promotion experts and advertisers, thus ceding a portion of their sacred editorial trust; as editors shrink from tough coverage of major advertisers lest they jeopardise ad revenue (2)."

It was bound to come in the end. We have seen a continuous process of redefining what news is, directing it towards what entertains and what is profitable. It is assumed that when things are profitable, it is because the news that is provided is what interests people. It means explaining to those who worry about the decline in press standards that "the world has changed", and then to preach "the end of politics". It means then to be surprised that the resulting decline of politics encourages readers and voters alike to lose interest — and to reject well-argued protests and warnings about this state of affairs with weasel words and high-sounding phrases. And through all this, people's belief in the value of journalism — already fragile — becomes ever more tenuous. In all this, the situation in the United States is emblematic. Between 1970 and 1997 the percentage of adults regularly reading a daily paper fell from 78% to 59%. Among readers aged between 21 and 35, the figures are even more depressing: 67% were regular readers in 1965, 39% in 1990, and only 31% in 1998 (3). Even though over a 10-year period the population of the US has grown by more than 20 million, press readership has dropped by 10%.

The generally accepted explanation is that television is to blame, having decimated the circulation of the big dailies, and the evening papers in particular (4). However, TV news also has its woes: over a five-year period the overall audience for TV news on the three major networks has fallen from 60% to 38%. In 1980, 37.3% of North American TV viewers watched the evening news on either CBS, ABC or NBC; by last year the figure stood at just 24.3% (5). Is it possible that the Internet has done to television what TV did to newspapers? This is only part of the story. Since 1995 the number of North Americans getting news from their computers at least once a week has indeed risen from 11 to 36 million, but almost all of them use it as an additional resource, to find out more about news that they have already heard via other media.

Surfing from one medium to another (perhaps as a prelude to abandoning them altogether?) has become even easier now that the dividing line between the various news media is becoming increasingly blurred. A world-class daily such as *The New York Times* has no hesitation in taking the populist path — needless to say, embellished with lashings of "sociological" analysis on sporting events, the confessions of stars and celebrities, and scandals of note — all with a view to providing some important "insight" into society.

TV news programmes on the national networks are often not much better than the succession of murders, weather bulletins and sport which are the staple of news broadcasting on local TV. In the words of one journalist, "the national 'news' will give us only rumours of sex scandals, footage of debris and corpses and grief-stricken kin, lots of corporate hype, live shots of suicide and murder and — aside from the biennial electoral horse race and the occasional barrage of pro-war propaganda — nothing on the world of politics here and abroad." (6)

Just under three years ago, more US citizens were able to recognise Judge Ito (the judge in the O J Simpson trial) than Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives. Is this actually surprising? In 1995 the three networks combined had devoted 26 hours 50 minutes to the O J Simpson trial, compared with only 3 hours 39 minutes to the budget showdown between Congress and the White House, which led to a total paralysis of the federal administration for over a month (7). And let's not forget CNN. The self-proclaimed "global network" had 70 correspondents covering the Simpson trial and devoted 630 hours of viewing time to it, even though he was largely unknown outside the US.

But when it comes to true journalistic myopia, the tone tends to be set by the local — and often "hyper-local" (8) — channels. On local TV news, 72% of news bulletins open with general news items about crime (police cars and helicopters, dead bodies, arrests of suspects), and crime takes up between 29% and 33% of their total duration (9). The Washington-based Centre for Media and Public Affairs recently analysed the content of TV news programmes in 13 major American cities over a period of three months. They found that, under the influence of marketing consultants, the content of these news programmes has become virtually identical from Boston to San Antonio. In an average half-hour news bulletin, crime, weather reports, accidents, disasters, media celebrities, sport and advertising add up to an average total of 24 minutes 20 seconds (10). This leaves 5 minutes 40 seconds each evening for covering all other local news, foreign news, health, education, science, the environment, etc.

How are we to explain this phenomenon, which can be summed up in the formula "If it bleeds, it leads"? A former vice-president of NBC, Joseph Angotti, suggests that "most of that crime coverage is not editorially driven, it's economically driven. It's the easiest, cheapest, laziest news to cover, because all they do is listen to the police radio, react to it, send out a mobile camera unit, spend an hour or two covering it and put it on the air" (11). And when it comes to profitability, this cut-price journalism, intercut with eight minutes of advertising in every half hour, accords perfectly with the interests of the multimedia conglomerates which, thanks to the deregulation set in motion by President Reagan, are now able to own several TV stations at once.

When Americans are asked what kind news interests them "a lot", local news and crime reporting head the list, while international news lags far behind (12). Needless to say, those responsible for the downgrading of journalism seize on such statistics like drowning men clutching at straws. They argue that they are giving the "public" what they want. However, such a defence — not dissimilar to the self-justifying logic of the drug dealer — runs counter to the pedagogic role of journalists, which is, in theory, to arouse public interest in areas where it did not exist before. A former president of NBC News, Reuven Frank, offers an opinion that is almost touching when you compare it with the mercenary intentions of today's purveyors of news: "News is something people don't know they are interested in until they hear about it. The job of a journalist is to take what's important and make it interesting." In 1972 Americans were not yet aware that they were about to become interested in the issue of Watergate.

On 8 June 1998, Princess Diana had been dead for almost a year and the World Cup had not yet begun. Even in this lull, in the radio news bulletins of France's principal broadcasters, the death of Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha was reckoned to be worth only the briefest of mentions. And a month later, with the death of Abacha having almost entirely passed them by, why should the French public have been "interested" in the death in jail of Moshood Abiola, leading opponent of the military regime? Broadcasters chose not to trouble the public with the news. After all, France was five days away from the World Cup final and Nigeria had already been eliminated . . .

The blurring of the dividing line between information and entertainment, both of which are now governed by the iron law of audience ratings, can have dangerous political and social effects. For instance, between 1975 and 1995, the number of Americans in prison rose from 380,000 to 1,600,000. However, this fact has more to do with the repressive fury of a public opinion that has been heated to fever pitch by an unprincipled and lazy press rather than any actual rise in crime levels. In the US the crime rate is actually lower that it was in 1975 (13). The phenomenon is explained by a lawyer: the "punishment boom [arises] in part because of the media-created illusion that rare, spectacularly violent crimes are actually commonplace and proliferating. When one parolee out of a 1,000 commits a terrible crime, the media act as if the only policy question were the stupidity of paroling that one aberrant individual. The conclusion, naturally, is to deny parole to everyone else. But the local news says nothing about the enormous cost of keeping the other 1,000 in jail" (14).

In the US media, international news does not sell. In 1996, after the electoral victory of Binyamin Netanyahu, *Time* magazine decided to put the new Israeli prime minister on its front cover. *Newsweek* did not. Its editor Maynard Parker, justified his decision in the following terms: "I don't see it as an event that's going to spill way beyond its borders (15)". At the level of world politics, the point was debatable. But at the level of sales statistics, it was irrefutable. With news-stand sales of 109,300, its "Israeli" front cover gave *Time* one of its five worst sales figures since 1980.

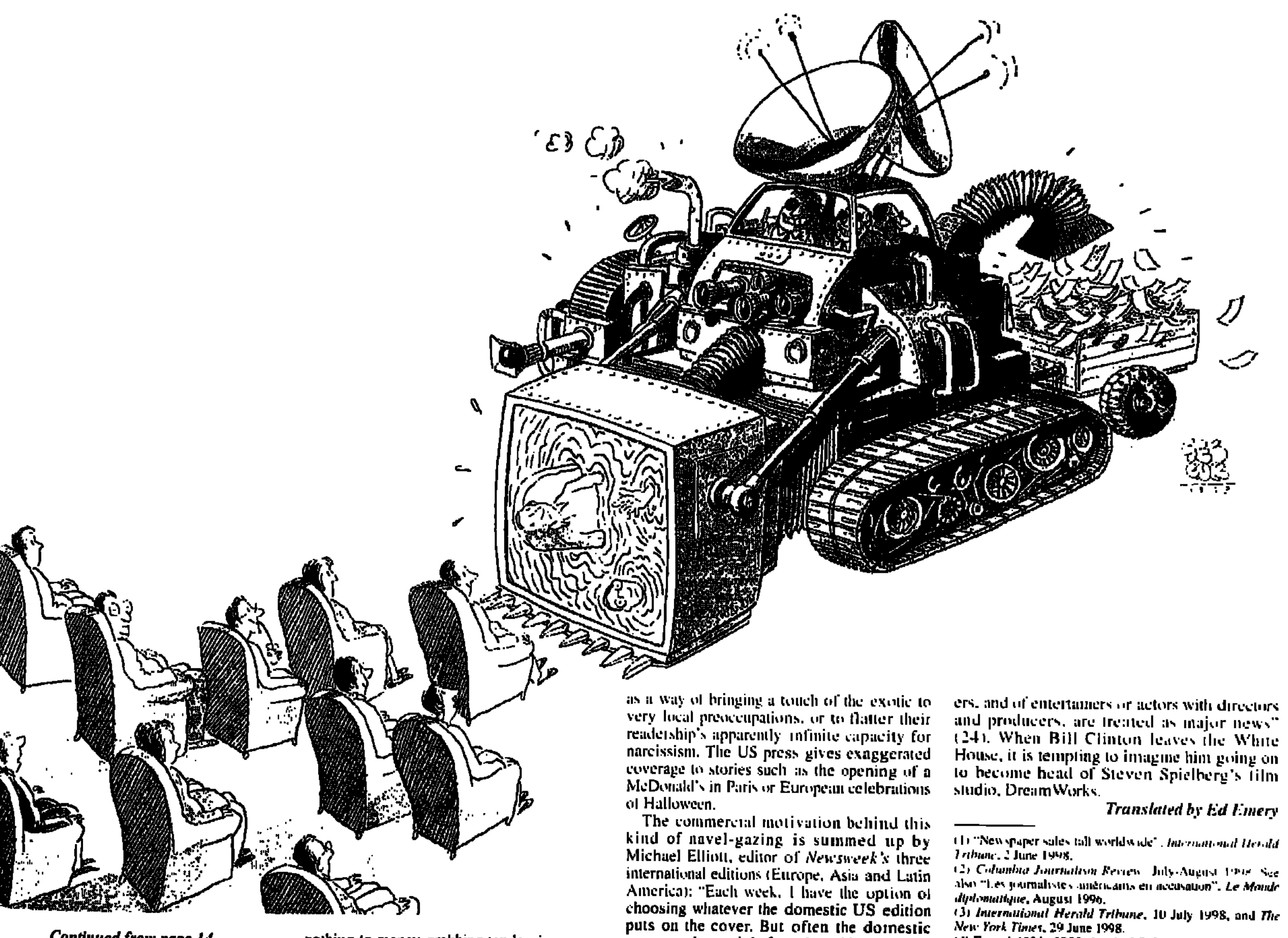
The other four included cover stories on Somalia, Bosnia and Boris Yeltsin (16). Its best sales were achieved last year. On 8 and 15 September 1997, the two editions covering the death of Princess Diana sold 803,000 and 1,183,000 copies respectively, demolishing the record set 25 years previously with the resignation of Richard Nixon as president. Mort Zuckermann, the owner of America's third-largest news magazine, *US News and World Report*, is thus not divulging state secrets when he concludes that "the poorest selling covers of the year are always those on international issues". And from this fact, he draws the appropriate conclusions.

His competitors too. In 1987 *Time* was devoting 11 of its cover stories to international news. By 1997, there was only one. The magazine's coverage of American political life has also fallen off, although not so rapidly. As a result we have stories about Stephen Spielberg, Brad Pitt, Lady Di, Jewel, Bill Cosby, Bob Dylan, how to slim, etc. In short, a diet based on the confessions of showbiz celebrities, revelations about the British royal family and practical information of a pseudo-medical nature. And a number of "quality" dailies and weeklies in France have been tempted to go down the same path.

CNN prides itself on the fact that it is capable of reaching 170 million viewers in almost 200 countries across the world. However, even on its own home patch in the US, "reaching" may be something of an overstatement. On average, only 0.4% of households provided with cable TV actually watch CNN. However, since that audience is rich, the advertising revenues continue to flow. And such low audience ratings do not predispose the channel's competitors to battle over shares of international news coverage. Thus, over a 20-year period, the percentage of broadcasting of this kind of news by the major TV net-

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JOHN GRESS



Continued from page 14

works has fallen from 45% to 13.5% (17). CBS news journalist Leslie Stahl explains: "My colleagues in prime time tell me that they have what they call minute-by-minute tracking and if they are doing a story on a foreign leader, for instance, the audience goes away and then they click back to see if the next story is more interesting. On '48 hours', one of their lowest-rated shows was the fall of the Berlin wall" (18). If foreign leaders are treated badly — in 1996 *Newsweek* was still having difficulties spelling the name of François Mitterrand (19) — the president of the US did not fare much better. In October 1997 the TV news broadcasts of the three major networks, over four consecutive evenings, devoted a total of only 7 minutes 20 seconds to Bill Clinton's visit to Southern Africa.

It could be argued that since the end of the cold war, diplomatic news is no longer as compelling as it was, But such an explanation still makes it hard to understand why, as the *Financial Times* observed at the time, in a press conference held in March 1994 we had to wait until the 16th question — put by a journalist from Honduras — for the US president to be questioned about something other than the Whitewater affair. Was it really the case that nothing of note had happened in the preceding week? The presidential favourite in the Mexican elections had just been murdered, there were rumours of a *coup d'état* in Moscow, Pyongyang was threatening South Korea and the last US soldiers were in the process of leaving Somalia . . .

On 16 August 1977, CBS had devoted the lead story and six minutes of its evening news bulletin to the signing of the treaty on the Panama Canal — and this despite the death of Elvis Presley that same day (20). Little more than 20 years later, Britain's ITN news network broadcast a story about a member of an amateur swimming club before the news about India's nuclear explosion. Is it really the case that such a reversal of priorities owes everything to the end of the cold war and nothing to money-grabbing tendencies among the news media? Is it really because some things are less interesting, or is it because some things are more profitable?

Former national security advisor to President Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, observes regretfully that "this country is on a binge of preoccupation with entertainment." But it is not wholly impossible in the US to find serious news about world events. *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* often produce better reporting than their French counterparts, and are capable of detailed coverage on issues of economic restructuring or inequalities of wealth. And the specialist foreign-policy press includes at least four quality titles: *Foreign Affairs*, *World Policy Journal*, *Foreign Policy* and *The National Interest*.

Too often, however, these journals reflect the preoccupations of cultural élites and the wealthy. The tone of a marketing letter circulated by *Foreign Affairs* is almost a caricature of this élitist tone: "Picture yourself sitting in a room where Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell, Zbigniew Brzezinski and other distinguished political and economic experts are speaking to each other as professionals analysing the world's most crucial problems and recommending policy positions as fully and seriously as if they were counselling the President of the United States" (21). As a result, the gap is slowly but surely growing between the news that is directed to the masses — who are treated to an avalanche of noise, distraction, sport, sadism and showbiz — and the news produced for a privileged élite, an area in which, as Claude Moisy, former head of Agence France-Presse, puts it, "only a small group of enlightened journalists and readers take part in the debate on foreign policy (22)".

Over the recent period, the debate about the creation of "world" cultures has become more pressing than ever. But the paradox of international news going so rapidly into decline redoubles when we discover that those sections of the press that still cover international news tend increasingly to use "foreign" news as a way of bringing a touch of the exotic to very local preoccupations, or to flatter their readership's apparently infinite capacity for narcissism. The US press gives exaggerated coverage to stories such as the opening of a McDonald's in Paris or European celebrations of Halloween.

The commercial motivation behind this kind of navel-gazing is summed up by Michael Elliott, editor of *Newsweek's* three international editions (Europe, Asia and Latin America): "Each week, I have the option of choosing whatever the domestic US edition puts on the cover. But often the domestic cover won't travel. In fact, the evidence of our sales is pretty compelling. Local covers outsell non-local ones. In Latin America last year, for example, four of our top five best-sellers were on Latin American topics" (23).

News You Can Use — that's the concept dominating the world of journalism today. What we get is articles designed to depoliticise social reality and attract advertisers, by discussing readers' everyday lives and ways of improving them: how to buy a good mattress, how to eat without getting fat, choosing the right vitamins, etc.

In explaining his recent departure from *US News and World Report*, James Fallows said that: "To choose an example about which Mort and I strongly disagreed: the shooting of Gianni Versace . . . Each page we give to, say, Versace is a page we can't use for . . . News You Can Use." It is true that this kind of news comes cheap and pays well, By comparison, keeping a correspondent in Hong Kong, Paris or Moscow costs a newspaper in the order to $500,000 a year and is not particularly profitable.

In December 1997 the national daily *USA Today*, which often sets the tone on local-interest stories, dedicated its cover story to the acquisition of a new dog by the president of the world's leading superpower. An entire page of the newspaper was given over to the animal, analysing its place in the life of President Clinton and giving a list of the previous canine occupants of the White House.

The commentator William Pfaff concludes from this baleful picture that: "The nation's takeover by entertainment has changed the press as well as television news broadcasting, which now has become an agent of the new ruling power. With honourable exceptions, American newspapers, magazines and television are today mainly concerned with stories and gossip about stars, including athletes and public figures who fall into the category of celebrity; with backstage film and television reports, and with promotional material on films and television programmes. The quarrels of sports stars with coaches or team owners, and of entertainers or actors with directors and producers, are treated as major news" (24). When Bill Clinton leaves the White House, it is tempting to imagine him going on to become head of Steven Spielberg's film studio, DreamWorks.

Translated by Ed Emery

(1) "Newspaper sales fall worldwide", *International Herald Tribune*, 2 June 1998.
(2) *Columbia Journalism Review*, July-August 1998. See also "Les journalistes américains en accusation", *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1996.
(3) *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 1998, and *The New York Times*, 29 June 1998.
(4) From 1,450 in 1950, they had fallen to 816 by 1997
(5) *Columbia Journalism Review*, op. cit.
(6) Marc Crispin Miller, "The nature of the beast", *The Nation*, 8 June 1998.
(7) And they devoted 13 hours 1 minute to the war in Bosnia, 8 hours 53 minutes to the Oklahoma bombing. *US News and World Report*, 16 October 1995.
(8) See Yves Eudes, "Essor des chaines hyperlocales aux Etats-Unis", *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 1994. See also Quentin Hardy, "The small screen gets even smaller in some US towns", *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 8 June 1998.
(9) See Michael Winerip's article "Does local TV news have to be so bad?", *The New York Times Magazine*, 11 January 1998.
(10) In Lawrence K. Grossman, "Does local TV news need a national nanny?", *Columbia Journalism Review*, May-June 1998.
(11) Lawrence Mifflin, "Crime falls, but not on TV", *The New York Times*, 6 July 1997.
(12) Local news: 69%; crime: 68%; international: 40%. In Lawrence Mifflin, op. cit.
(13) See Richard Morin, "An airwave of crime. While TV news coverage of murders has soared — feeding public fears — crime is actually down", *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 18 August 1997.
(14) Quoted by James Fallows, Breaking the news: How the media undermine American democracy, Pantheon Books, New York 1996. See also Loïc Wacquant, "Imprisoning the American poor", *Le Monde diplomatique* in *The Guardian Weekly*, September 1998.
(15) In Robin Pogrebin, "Foreign coverage less prominent in US magazines", *The New York Times*, 23 September 1996.
(16) Respectively 21 December 1992 (111,176 copies), 29 March 1993 (109,365 copies) and 17 May 1993 (102,193 copies).
(17) In Brian Knowlton, "Americans take a worldly view", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 June 1998. See also "For Newsweeklies, no place like home", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 September 1996 and "Les médias américains délaissent le monde", *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1994.
(18) *The New York Times Magazine*, 26 June 1994.
(19) *Newsweek*, 22 July 1996.
(20) See the editorial "Here is the news" and the article "Stop press", *The Economist*, 4 July 1998.
(21) Quoted by Eric Alterman, "Reading foreign policy: Are those journals talking to Us?", *The Nation*, 27 October 1997.
(22) *La Correspondance de la presse*, Paris, 20 January 1997. See also "Babel", *Prospect*, London, November 1996.
(23) Michael Elliott, "All the world's a front page", *The Guardian*, 19 February 1996.
(24) William Pfaff, "Entertainment Coup, or America's politics of illusion", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 December 1997.



Hard times for working women

BY MARGARET MARUANI

DESPITE 20 years of mass unemployment and against all forecasts, the number of working women in Europe continues to rise. This concerns many people, especially when the enforced reduction in working hours is becoming a permanent feature of the French — and European — economic scene.

Just when it seems fair to share out that rare commodity called work, women want more of it. There is something perverse about this. Women's determination to work seems out of place, even unjustified — or at any rate less justified than that of men. What is evident for men is incidental for women or so it seems.

Women have not had an automatic right to a job during these past two decades of unemployment. Various clichés about women's "freedom" not to work have conveniently surfaced. Yet they have stubbornly remained in the labour market, even at the price of worsening working conditions and growing job insecurity.

On the eve of the millennium, female employment continues its irresistible rise: there are now nearly 11.7 million working women in France compared with 6.5 million in 1960. And the same phenomenon can be found right across Europe. The feminisation of the workforce is proceeding apace, while male employment is static or in decline. Between 1975 and 1995 the number of men in the workforce remained steady at around 86 million. But over the same period the number of working women shot up — from 45 million to 61 million (1).

In the 1960s women made up only around 30% of Europe's working population. By 1996 this had risen to more than 42.5% (2). So the 1980s (which ushered in mass unemployment) had no effect on the move towards a more gender-balanced labour market that had begun 40 years earlier. Moreover this is the first time in the history of wage-earning that women have invaded the labour market during a period of high unemployment.

But this advance has had its price. It has created hard-core areas where women are under-represented and under-employed — areas that have come to be accepted as male-dominated zones. And it has spelled the end of professional equality.

The question for the future is not, as we might have feared, that a woman's place is in the home, even though technocrats and governments fondly imagine from time to time that some kind of "mother's wage" might persuade women to quit the job market and make way for men. But which jobs would they vacate? Would unemployed men be willing to replace women in their traditional jobs as nurses, secretaries, check-out staff, cleaners? And how much would women have to be "paid" to leave their jobs?

The rhetoric about women being "full-time wives and mothers" is really about legitimising inequality. The suggestion that women might withdraw silently from the job market and do nothing implies that their rights in the matter are of no importance, subject as ever to the contingencies of the moment. For them to be unemployed is less of a problem than it is for men.

But women's unemployment is deeper and more structural than men's. What the past 20 years shows is that there is under-employment among women. The figures are clear enough: in France, less than half the people in work are women — but they constitute more than half of the unemployed. A survey by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (Insee) in 1998 (3) shows that the overall unemployment rate (11.8%) breaks down into 10.2% for men and 13.8% for women. It affects all age and social/professional groups, but the situation is particularly critical among young people under the age of 25.

The study shows that a quarter of young people on the labour market are unemployed. But if you break the figures down according to sex, the rate is 22% for men and 30% for women. The breakdown by social/professional group also reveals major disparities: 5% for professionals and executives, but 15% for female white-collar workers and as much as 20% for female manual workers. This state of affairs is not new, but who bothers to mention it?

The silence is all the more deafening because the rhetoric about unemployment is generally targeted at particular groups. We hear about youth unemployment, graduate unemployment, unemployment among the unskilled, the over-40s, etc. This masks one very simple phenomenon: the selectivity of unemployment reflects the most enduring of social inequalities — those of gender and social class.

Clearly there are unemployment "tolerance thresholds" based on social criteria. Which brings us back to the question of the right to work. If the high level of female unemployment is so invisible, it is not because of ignorance or indifference. It has its roots in something much deeper: our tolerance of unemployment among women (4). This is not peculiar to France. It is the case in all the countries of the European Union (5) — in 1996, 9.8% of men and 12.4% of women were unemployed.

There is another, less well-known disparity: when women are unemployed, they get far lower benefits than men. In the EU, one unemployed man in two receives unemployment benefit, but only one in three unemployed women.

Being unemployed doesn't just mean being without work — with all the demoralisation that entails. It also means being part of a group whose right to a job is recognised. But there are many grey areas on the fringes of the labour market that are mostly made up of women. Women who are not paid unemployment benefit, women who have given up looking for a job, housewives relegated to inactivity. Whatever. But they all add up to pockets of poverty on the fringe of joblessness, which escape the usual counts of unemployment.

As a consequence, there has been a real explosion in under-employment since the early 1980s. Insecurity has been introduced to the workplace in various guises since the mid-1970s: temporary work, fixed-term contracts, all sorts of training schemes, and now job creation contracts.

In 1998 Insee recorded 1.6 million people under-employed — basically those who said they wished to work more. Like the unemployed, many of them are women — in particular, part-time workers. In France 84% of part-time workers are women, compared with an average of 81% for the EU as a whole. However, in France, unlike many of its European neighbours, part-time working is a recent phenomenon.

It was as full-time workers that women flooded on to the job market in the 1960s. Part-time work did not appear in France until the early 1980s (when there were about 1.5 million part-timers compared with 3.8 million today). The growth in part-time working was a consequence of unemployment. Part-time means crisis time. However, it continues to be described as "reconciling family and working life" and giving women flexibility. Which women? For what kind of wages?

The reality is stark. Domestic cleaners, shop assistants, check-out staff, child-minders, office workers — how many are now working split shifts for a monthly income that is scarcely a living wage? Over the years part-time working has become a form of under-employment reserved for women (6) — a process of hidden impoverishment. Hidden because every mention of part-time working is muddied with talk of "choice" and flexible or reduced working hours.

All discussion of part-time working focuses on the question of time — conveniently passing over the matter of wages. But part-time working means part-time wages. And hundreds of thousands of women are working for less than the basic minimum wage. There are no known figures.

But a recent French study (7) shows that women have 80% of the low and very low salaries (those below the monthly minimum wage) and that the vast majority of them (77%) come from part-time work. It is a process of pauperisation (which people would be quick to point out if it was the United States) and the creation of a fringe of "working poor" — people who are not unemployed, not excluded, not on social security, but who work without managing to make a living. And the vast majority of them are women.

With well over 3 million people registered out of work, unemployment has turned into a form of blackmail in the workplace. The unspoken fear of redundancy has led to pressure to reduce wages and threats to increase hours of work. This has not reduced women's determination to stay in the job market. But it has started a trend towards the feminising of poverty — and this time on this side of the Atlantic.

Translated by Malcolm Greenwood

Margaret Maruani is a sociologist at the Centre nationale de la recherche nationale (CNRS)

(1) Employment in Europe 1996, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels.
(2) Eurostat, Enquête sur les forces de travail, Luxembourg 1996.
(3) 1998 Survey of Employment, Insee résultats, No. 617-618, 198 pages, 149 F.
(4) Teresa Torns, *Chômages*, in *La place des femmes, les enjeux de l'identité et de l'égalité au regard des sciences sociales*, La Découverte, Paris, 1995.
(5) See Annie Gauvin, *Le sur-chômage féminin à la lumière des comparaisons européennes*, in Margaret Maruani (ed.) *Les nouvelles frontières de l'inégalité. Hommes et femmes sur le marché du travail*, La Découverte-Mage, Paris, 1998.
(6) See Margaret Maruani and Chantal Nicole, *Au labeur des dames*, Syros, Paris, 1989.
(7) Pierre Concialdi and Sophie Ponthieux, *Les bas salaires en France*, Dares-Ires Report, Document d'études Dares No. 15, October 1997.

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The Guardian Weekly LE MONDE DIPLOMATIQUE readers' survey

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the writing is of a high quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
the articles are too opinionated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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12 (a) Are you learning/studying or teaching English formally (eg, in a class, using books, using cassettes, personal tuition)?

Learning/studying ☐ Teaching ☐ *skip to 13* neither ☐ *skip to 13*

(b) What are the main reasons you are learning or studying English ?
(please tick as many as apply)

to use in my work ☐
to improve my employment prospects ☐
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for other reasons ☐

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	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
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BBC World TV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BBC Prime TV (Europe only)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other BBC radio service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other BBC TV service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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15 Are you: Male ☐ Female ☐

16 How old are you? Under 25 ☐ 25 - 34 ☐ 35 - 44 ☐ 45 - 54 ☐ 55 - 64 ☐ 65-74 ☐ 75+ ☐

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18 Which type of organisation do you work for?

Commercial organisation/Company		Public sector/Education/Other	
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Banking/finance/insurance	☐	Government/public sector	☐
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Le Monde

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998

Russia fails to get to grips with figures

François Bonnet in Moscow

WHEN governments are faced with a situation they can't control, they normally set themselves clear objectives and a firm agenda. On November 10, the Russian prime minister, Yevgeny Primakov did precisely that, when he and his ministers unveiled their proposals for Russia's ailing economy at a closed session of the Duma. Unfortunately all that emerged from the meeting was an extraordinary flurry of conflicting figures.

The first deputy prime minister in charge of the economy and finance, Yuri Maslyukov, presented various scenarios to the Duma. The best scenario was a 1999 budget with a 2 per cent surplus, 30 per cent annual inflation and a stabilised rouble. The conditions under which this could be achieved were straightforward: Russia would need the International Monetary Fund to release a $4.3 billion loan which has been frozen since September.

The worst scenario, involving no extra international finance, would mean 300 per cent inflation, a plummeting national currency, and the printing of 130 billion roubles. But the government said other scenarios, somewhere between those two extremes, were also under consideration.

Disconcerted Duma members were not amused. When would the draft budget be adopted, they wanted to know. There had been talk of November 15; and November 17 and 19 had also been mentioned. "We've got till December 1," the finance minister, Mikhail Zadornov, ruled on November 10. But that same day he added that it would be "premature to fix" a budget when its main parameters had not yet been ascertained.

Estimates as to the quantity of banknotes being printed have been equally imprecise. "If the issue takes place, it will be minimal," Primakov had said. On October 31, Zadornov talked of 20 billion roubles in 1998. On November 2, Maslyukov said "a maximum of 12 billion roubles". Two days later, he said "not more than 15 billion this year, and 30-35 billion next year".

On November 11 Zadornov came up with yet another figure: "A maximum of 25 billion roubles in the last quarter of 1998." And in 1999? "The volume of the issue has not been determined," he replied, while his colleague Maslyukov mentioned a figure of 130 billion roubles.

All these figures are no doubt completely unreliable. According to several Western experts, almost 50 billion roubles have already been injected into the bankrupt banking system. There is even controversy over the implementation of the fourth quarter's emergency budget. The government says it will remain within the expected budget deficit of 60 billion roubles. But the daily Kommersant, after doing its sums, reckons the actual deficit will amount to 118 billion roubles.

The bandying about of such wildly differing figures left Primakov unfazed. He emerged deadpan from his meeting with members of the Duma, describing their discussion as "very useful".

(November 12)



Primakov . . . rouble trouble — PHOTO: ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO

Corsica remains beyond rule of law

Jacques Follorou

ON OCTOBER 31, during the deliberations of the Corsican assembly, the prefect for the Corsican region, Bernard Bonnet, was asked by nationalist members when he thought he would leave the island. His scathing reply was unusual for a representative of the government: "I shall go when your friends stop racketeering, when your friends stop killing people at village fêtes, when your friends stop planting bombs."

Bonnet's response was symptomatic of feelings that are still running high in Corsica 10 months after the murder of his predecessor, Claude Erignac. But it should not be allowed to obscure the essential message of his speech, which was that the government's policy of introducing the rule of law in Corsica is by no means assured of success. "We're not at the beginning of the end of that policy," he said. "We're not even at the end of the beginning. We're at the beginning of the beginning."

The government faces three serious obstacles in its efforts to apply the full force of republican law on the island. The first is the increasingly hard line taken by Corsican separatist groups, who continue to use bombs and murder as political weapons.

The police say young nationalist extremists, groomed by old hands in the independence movement, are becoming increasingly powerful, and are forcing out those leaders who have favoured a more moderate approach.

The impact of this resurgent hardline nationalism has been magnified by the divisions in the main nationalist organisations. Their most recent leaders have tried to recreate a unified movement, but with each new internal crisis they have become increasingly discredited in the eyes of rank-and-file activists. Their numbers have also dwindled as the judicial system has at last begun to flex its muscles. The result is that the leaders of the nationalist camp are no longer in control of the situation.

The effect of these political tensions has been to push the issue of law and order on to the sidelines. Underground groups are demanding that the state come up with a political solution to the Corsican problem before dealing with legal matters. And there are signs that ordinary people are also starting to believe that political solution is more pressing than a return to the rule of law.

In the context of this worsening situation, the government faces a second major obstacle: it cannot count on the support of Corsica's elected representatives. Perhaps echoing their constituents, they appear not to want the rule of law to be introduced either. They said as much recently, when they supported the neo-Gaullist, Paul Natali, over the outgoing leftwing candidate at the recent senatorial elections. Natali, a former president of the Haute-Corse general council, won the elections despite the fact that he has been convicted of tax fraud.

Natali epitomises the way patronage works in Corsica. Although charged with favouritism in a public works case a week before the election, he managed to garner support from politicians on both left and right, including Jean Baggioni, the chief negotiator with the government on the issue of the island's development.

Other politicians in the Corsican general assembly are more subtle, but they clearly believe a political solution should take precedence over law and order. The centre-right Liberal Democrat José Rossi, a former minister who is now president of the Corsican assembly, has been noticeably lukewarm in his support of the government. Meanwhile the centre-left Radical civil service minister, Emile Zuccarelli, has kept such a low profile since Erignac's murder that he has allowed opponents of the government to which he belongs to grab the political limelight in Corsica.

The third obstacle is the result of opposition to the way the government has handled the issue. Determination to show decisiveness at the murder of its prefect, the government pushed law and order to the top of the agenda. This rapidly alienated ordinary people.

At first, Corsican public opinion welcomed the abolition of the system of exemptive privileges and patronage, which previous governments had kept in place in an effort to secure civil peace on the cheap. But it did not take long before the tighter procedures began to adversely affect Corsicans' daily lives. Many people concluded that the government was concentrating too much on minor offences, and letting the big fish escape. The fact the wheels of justice move so slowly helped to reinforce this impression.

The disgruntlement was exacerbated by over-zealous enforcement of regulations in banking and administration: overdrafts were banned, loans turned down on unprecedented grounds, demolition orders slapped on century-old buildings because they did not conform to the law.

In response to the indiscriminate application of government directives, Bonnet himself, when addressing the Corsican assembly, took a swipe at the public authorities: they had, he claimed, tried to make up for a long period of laxity or inaction by over-zealously enforcing regulations.

The government now finds itself in a bind. If it continues to concentrate on law and order at the expense of a political solution, the violence will continue. But if it fails to sustain its campaign to introduce the rule of law on Corsica, it may lose some of its legitimacy, given the solemn pledges made by President Jacques Chirac and the prime minister, Lionel Jospin. A delicate balancing act is clearly required. Success would set a good example to other regions of France such as the Var *département* on the Côte d'Azur. Failure could reverse by years the progress that has already been made.

(November 10)

A step closer to self-rule

EDITORIAL

ON NOVEMBER 8, the population of New Caledonia voted resoundingly in favour of a referendum which marked a further step towards eventual independence from France. The referendum came in the wake of last May's Nouméa accords, which were signed by the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, and the two parties that had put their names to the 1988 Matignon accords on New Caledonia — the separatist Socialist Kanak National Liberation Front (FLNKS) and the "loyalist" Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR).

There is good reason to be optimistic about the results of this referendum; indeed the fact that the parties have got this far is a substantial achievement in itself. But the goal of independence remains a long way off.

The turning point came in the wake of the tragedy of the Ouvéa cave, where 21 gendarmes and separatists died in a gun battle. This tragic incident provided the impetus for a more constructive approach to the troubled relationship between France and its colony. The then prime minister, Michel Rocard, succeeded in bringing together Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the emblematic head of the separatists, and Jacques Lafleur, the powerful leader of New Caledonia's European community.

Tjibaou paid for his audacity with his life at the hands of Kanak extremists, leaving the way open for Lafleur to consolidate his position at the expense of his compatriots, who are lulled by an easy life into not caring too much about the future.

Today things are quieter, and the substance of the Nouméa accords is fortunately less subject to the pressure of events than were the Matignon accords 10 years ago. But the government is still taking an equally long shot. In the referendum, both supporters and opponents of independence responded with a massive 72 per cent "yes" vote. The problem is this means different things to different people.

For the FLNKS, the next 15-20 years will be a necessary period of learning how to govern before assuming complete sovereignty. The RPCR, on the other hand, sees the accords as a means of strengthening peace and prosperity under the protective wing of the republic.

The more optimistic members in both camps hope that this fresh period of forced power-sharing introduced by the tripartite Nouméa accords will forge their common destiny along the lines of "Two colours, a single people", the original slogan of the Union Calédonienne, the oldest and main party in the FLNKS.

But that goal is still a long way off. Although the Kanak electorate once again voted as instructed by the FLNKS, the movement's leaders face a growing challenge from young Kanaks who see no changes for the better in their daily lives.

In the loyalist camp, critics of the "Lafleur system", which is seen as too authoritarian and paternalistic, are increasingly tempted to vote with the rump of hardliners who continue to yearn for the "good old colonial days".

What New Caledonian society has yet to understand is what it means to live in a true multi-cultural environment. Unless it can learn these lessons, it will fall at the last and most difficult hurdle of decolonisation.

(November 10)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998

Lebanon's past lost in the melting pot

Frédéric Edelmann and Emmanuel de Roux

THE exhibition Liban, l'Autre Rive (Lebanon, the Other Bank), now on at the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA) in Paris, is at once ambitious and problematic. It forms the high point of a series of events which will continue at the IMA until the end of the year.

The exhibition opens with the celebrated cedar of Lebanon, which features on the flag of the mountainous little nation that is hemmed in between Syria, which has 35,000 troops on Lebanese soil, and Israel, which occupies the southern part of its territory.

The first part of the exhibition covers 3,000 years of Lebanon's past, from prehistory to the end of Late Antiquity: a period marked by both expeditions and invasions. The invention of the import-export trade is illustrated by a wide variety of objects and artefacts.

From the earliest times the region was a crossroads and so has been heavily influenced by the many powers that claimed sovereignty over it. The city states that emerged in the third millennium BC took advantage of their location to trade with their neighbours — Greece, still in its early days, the Hittites to the north, the Egyptian empire to the south, and the civilisations of the Tigris and Euphrates to the east.

Cretan influences can also be detected. But the predominant presence was Egyptian, as can be judged from many of the exhibits, including an obelisk with hieroglyphs mentioning "Abishemou, Prince of Byblos"; graceful offerings in the form of hippopotami; dog-faced baboons and crocodiles (all found round the Nile); and slender gilded bronze figurines.

A clear link with Mesopotamia can be found in a thin ivory plate, discovered in Byblos, which depicts animals fighting. The superb draughtsmanship and the ferocity of the scene attest to its origins.

A frieze on the monumental sarcophagus of Ahirom (1,000 BC) shows a procession of dignitaries. Formally, Egypt is still present here. But for the first time, carved on its sides, we see the original alphabet invented by the Phoenicians that gave birth to the alphabets of the Western world.

This melting pot of styles characterises many of the other exhibits: a Greek drinking vessel in the shape of a boar's head, a Persian capital with a bull's head, Hellenised children from Echmoun, anthropoid sarcophagi made of immaculate marble and adorned with indisputably Hellenic figures, Roman mosaics with Greek subtitles, and a fine pensive head of the Roman emperor, Septimus Severus.

This is a region of many religions, which were either syncretic or managed to live side by side. The Jupiter of Heliopolis merges with the native Baal. Worship of the Persian Mithras happily coexisted with the previous cult of Aion-Kronos (a hybrid divinity consisting of a youth with a lion's head and a snake entwined round his body).

Christianity added several new ingredients to this already complicated religious mix. But when it begins to deal with the period from the 6th century, when Mohammed's horsemen swept into the region, the exhibition begins to disappoint.

In the first place, the number of exhibits declines to almost nothing. The history of the past 14 centuries is only sparingly alluded to, with whole epochs — the Frankish or Ottoman period, for example — reflected in a manuscript or stela.

The period of ancient archaeology does not pose any political or confessional problems and exalts the legendary unity of modern Lebanon. But after the 6th century, visitors will be forced to refer to the catalogue, which turns out to be more edifying than the exhibition itself. One can't help feeling that this incomplete overview of the region's medieval and modern history has a purpose — to avoid giving too detailed an interpretation of the more recent past, wherein lie the origins and fault lines that now divide the Lebanese.

Indeed, at this point, it is no longer the Lebanese who seem to be constructing their own history, but travellers from Europe. In the 19th century, the archaeologists, writers, draughtsmen and photographers who visited Lebanon had an extraordinary thirst for knowledge.

This recourse to an external point of view unfortunately favours the picturesque at the expense of the scientific. It has the political merit of being neutral and disembodied, and thus not offensive to any faction, but the cost is high. This Lebanon of the emirs comes across as a land of knowledge gained from abroad, where the role of indigenous printing, magazines and the press, for example, is heavily underestimated.

Eventually, engravings and photographs bring home the fact that all the treasures at the IMA are shown out of context, snatched from their sites of origin in the ruins of Baalbek, Byblos, Tyre and Sidon. The effect is to erase the architectural and urban significance of these places. The curators could have tried to compensate for this shortcoming by ending the visit with a series of films that take their cue more from the travelogue than from the scholarly documentary. Unfortunately, they haven't.

A treasure which tells the story of Lebanon's past: a terracotta mask from the 8th century BC, found in Tyre

Liban, L'Autre Rive, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris. Closed Sunday and Monday. Until April 30.

(October 31)

Politics of archaeology

THE exhibition now on at the IMA, *Frédéric Edelmann and Emmanuel de Roux write*, closes with a giant aerial photograph of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, taken in 1995. It shows a vast expanse of building sites and archaeological excavations. On display are some recently unearthed relics, but they give a poor idea of the artisanal and cultural genius of the Phoenicians, who founded the city.

The image suggests that Lebanon's ancient heritage is in safe hands. But, as we have seen in places like China and Israel, archaeology can easily be manipulated for political ends. In Lebanon it has been used as a stalking horse for the property speculation and haphazard town planning that have blighted Beirut and other cities.

Hidden behind the veil of archaeological respectability is the ongoing massacre of Lebanon's heritage which, nine years after the end of the civil war in 1989, is threatening its most vulnerable sites, including those protected by the Unesco World Heritage Convention.

Many Beirut *souks* (markets) have vanished, some in wartime (Sursok and Nourieh), others at the hands of post-war demolition gangs (Tawileh and Ayass). Almost nothing remains of districts like Gharghoul, Mar Maroun and Wadi Abou Jmil.

Since 1991 the centre of Beirut has been under threat, after a private property and finance firm, Solidere, acquired 130 hectares earmarked for renovation. The company, whose links with Rafic Hariri, the Lebanese prime minister, are well known, has also given generously to Beirut's archaeologists.

The ancient city of Tyre, despite Unesco protection, is now also under threat. The new developers intend to carry out archaeological digs before parcelling out land in what remains of the ancient centre, now the "green lung" of the modern metropolis. Similar plans are being considered for Saida (ancient Sidon), Tripoli and even Byblos.

In expanding or still war-blighted cities, clashes between those who defend the past and those who are prepared to invent a future are inevitable. Altogether different is the policy which draws a distinction between archaeological finds from antiquity and an architectural heritage dating from a more recent past, and which argues that the latter should be demolished to make way for a wonderful new urban fabric.

That is the role which, with some considerable nerve and a clear conscience, Lebanon's political community and economic decision-makers (they are often the same people) apparently want archaeology to play.

(October 31)

Victor Hugo through the camera's eye

Michel Guerrin and Emmanuel de Roux

THE photograph shows a seated man facing the camera with his hands clasped together. He is wearing a dark frock-coat and is bathed in a pool of light. The collar of his shirt has been pulled down over a voluminous choker. He has a huge forehead, and hair long enough to conceal his ears. His eyes are shut. Victor Hugo has written on the photograph, in approximate Spanish: "Victor Hugo listening to God."

Hugo towers above all the other figures who feature in the moving and intimate exhibition of photographs, drawings and writings now on at the Musée d'Orsay. His presence is equally dominant in the show at the Maison Victor Hugo.

An elected member of the Republican assembly, Hugo was forced into exile in the Channel Islands after the coup of 1851 which brought Napoleon III to power.

Shortly afterwards Hugo set up a photographic studio, with the help of his sons Charles and François Victor, and Auguste Vacquerie, the brother-in-law of his late and much lamented daughter, Léopoldine.

Between 1852 and 1855, the studio produced 350 works, most of which were portraits printed on paper, but also 16 daguerreotypes. Hugo tried, unsuccessfully, to sell his pictures. Dozens of prints were made of many of the portraits, and sometimes they were collected together into albums, 13 of which are known to have survived, including the famous Album des Proscrits (The Outlaws' Album), and sent to relatives or given to visiting friends.

Hugo left the job of operating the camera to his sons, especially Charles, and to Vacquerie. But there is a wealth of evidence to show that he took part in the setting up of the photographs.

His remarks on the photographic process are unambiguous. In 1853 he wrote to his publishers, Hetzel: "It is precisely lithography — heavy, inept and muddy lithography — that needs to die at the hands of its sister, which is trickier to pronounce but infinitely more beautiful: photography . . . It is the photographic revolution that we want to bring about."

Hugo never abandons himself. He is always in control of his own image. He stares intently at the camera in a heroic pose. He is upright, usually with one hand held against the side of his forehead, and the other in his frock-coat. He is also shown in profile, gazing into the distance.

He is no longer the "sublime child" discovered by Chateaubriand, and not yet the bushy-bearded patriarch of the Third Republic. He is 50 and clean-shaven. His face is sometimes drawn, sometimes fleshy.

Hugo referred to Charles's pictures as having been taken "in collaboration with the sun". Charles the dandy and Vacquerie the bearded revolutionary of 1848 also took portraits of visiting friends and members of the family, including the two Adèles, Hugo's still statuesque wife and his daughter, a woman with a beautifully melancholic face who was soon to lose her sanity.

Photography provided a point of transition between everyday island life, which was not always congenial, and the writer's imagination. It was also a way of keeping in contact with the world outside the islands and binding together his circle of close friends.

These pictures also mark the beginning of the move towards amateur photography intended for family consumption (hence the albums) and printed in small formats. And with the switch from daguerreotypes to prints on paper, it became all the more easier to sustain the legend of the lonely, indomitable poet.

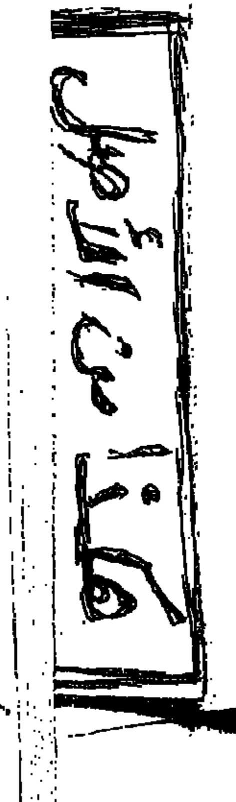
Victor Hugo, Photographe de l'Exil, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Closed Monday. Until January 20.

Dans l'Intimité d'Hauteville House, Maison Victor Hugo, Paris. Closed Monday.

(November 7)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998

University degrees, like hamburgers and soft drinks, have become one more 'product' which can be franchised to overseas suppliers, writes **Donald MacLeod**

Education goes global

OVERSEAS students now account for almost one in five students at British universities — and the numbers look set to grow even more rapidly in future. While the influx of foreign students and the frantic attempts of British higher education institutions to recruit them have received plenty of publicity, a quiet revolution has gone unnoticed. For an increasing proportion of these students are not "at" university in Britain at all — they follow their studies and brave exams and assessment in their home states without setting foot on a British campus.

There have long been pure distance learning packages available to people through the London university external degrees or the Open University. But the mushrooming of hybrid "overseas validated courses", as they are called, where UK universities franchise their degrees to institutions abroad, has been phenomenal. Virtually unknown 10 years ago, they now boast an estimated 140,000 students enrolled at British universities, according to a study by Sussex university's Institute of Development Studies.

The report by Paul Bennell and Terry Pearce argues this is part of a process of internationalising higher education that will have far-reaching consequences for universities in developed countries as well as the Third World. "Just as the Coca-Cola and McDonald's corporations award franchises to companies and entrepreneurs in overseas countries to produce their products under tightly defined and rigorously enforced conditions, so too are a rapidly growing number of universities franchising other overseas institutions to offer their qualifications."

They paint a picture of cut-throat global competition involving private investors and companies as well as universities, and predict potentially dire effects for institutions in developing countries which are likely to lose out to British, American and Australian universities promoting prestigious and portable qualifications. "Just as trade liberalisation has resulted in large swaths of the industrial sector being wiped out in many countries, as higher education becomes increasingly privatised, then the threat posed by foreign providers becomes equally real," note Bennell and Pearce.

Big money is involved, although the authors admit reliable figures for UK education exports are not available. The Department of Trade and Industry estimates foreign exchange earnings from education were at least $15 billion in 1997, up from less than $12 billion the previous year — with overseas students accounting for about half of that. Bennell and Pearce estimate that overseas validated courses are now worth $410 million a year to British universities.

In Britain the growth has been driven by the new universities, which account for two-thirds of overseas validated courses. In contrast many of the older universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Edinburgh had none of these courses abroad, which the report attributes to "a desire on their part to maintain the international status and exclusiveness of their qualifications".

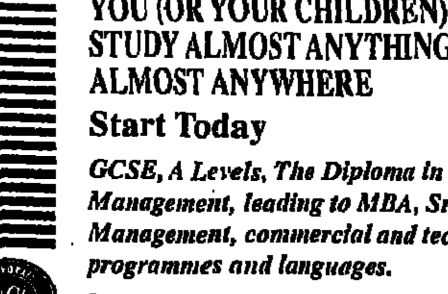
For the Sussex researchers the key question is to what extent other countries will also attempt to internationalise their education services for monetary gain. "We believe that Australia and the UK are market leaders and that the majority of developed industrial economies will follow their lead during the next five to 10 years. There are already clear signs that universities and examination bodies in other countries (most notably Canada and South Africa) are becoming increasingly active in exploiting overseas education and training markets."

The Sussex report concludes: "Trade in knowledge and skills will grow exponentially as the pressure on governments to create 'high skill' societies continues to intensify and trade barriers are eliminated with the enforcement of World Trade Organisation provisions."

Overseas investors will increasingly establish their own campuses, and governments in developing and transitional countries will encourage them to do so, the authors of the report believe. As business becomes global, so the advantages — indeed necessity — of international qualifications will increase. People in developing and transitional countries want the competitive advantage of a recognised qualification such as the MBA while international companies want training and education they understand, especially when integrated production systems straddle national boundaries.

Increasing numbers of students are taking British degree courses without setting foot on a UK university campus PHOTO: DON McPHEE

The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Exporting Education to Developing and Transitional Economies, by Paul Bennell and Terry Pearce, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE. Email: ids.books@sussex.ac.uk



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998









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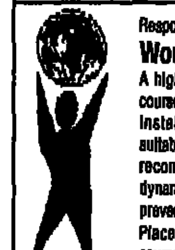
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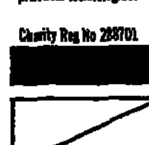
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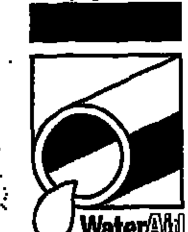
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The **Guardian Weekly**

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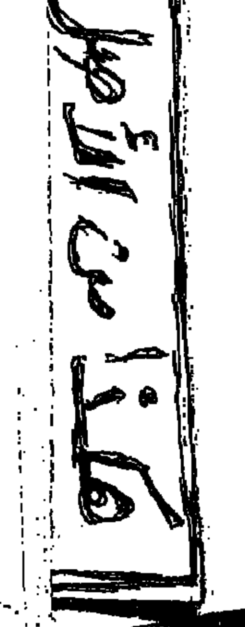
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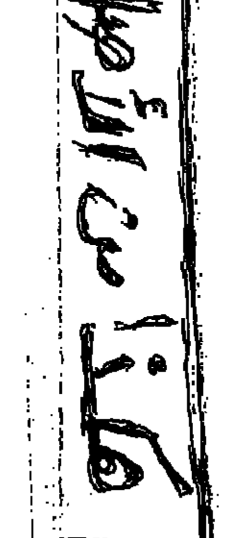
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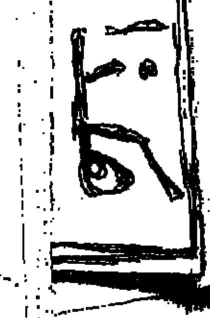
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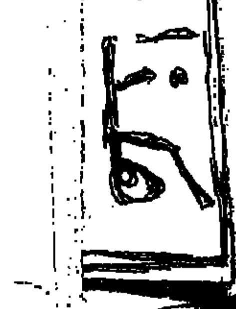












GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998

There's a new menace stalking Britain's streets. It's not road rage, or distracted drivers with mobile phones. It's a man in a white van. **Nicolas Lezard** reports

An acceptable prejudice

WHITE Van Man. He sounds like a strange super-hero, but he's actually a scourge, a danger to anyone venturing on the road. So serious a threat is he that Renault have hired the Social Issues Research Centre to examine the phenomenon, and to find out how bad White Van Man (hereafter referred to as WVM) can really be.

How bad do we think he is? Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting behind the wheel of your nice car. Let us say that the traffic is fluid, if a little packed for comfort. Now, let the image of a white van float into your consciousness. What is the driver of this white van doing? Is he (a) waving you into a gap in the traffic with a courtly nod? (b) charging into the tiny space in front of you as if contemptuous of your very existence? (c) leaning out of the window, calling you "Darling", and making a personal remark about your legs/face/breasts?

I bet it's not (a) — which is interesting because, as a Guardian reader, you are not meant to suffer from prejudice. But, in the case of WVM, it would seem a little prejudice and stereotyping doesn't hurt. One newspaper described him thus: "[WVM] is supposed to be a rude, aggressive, stressed-out slob who drives too fast and cuts up other road-users."

WVM also parks crazily in the middle of busy intersections to make his deliveries, and has a decidedly laissez-faire attitude to the effects of junk food on his constitution, and the environment. So it was in the interests of deep sociological exploration that the Guardian saw fit to put me in a white van of my own for a day, to see if the very fact of sitting in the cab of a white van would turn me — a courteous, respectable and civilised knight of the road — into a rude, aggressive slob.

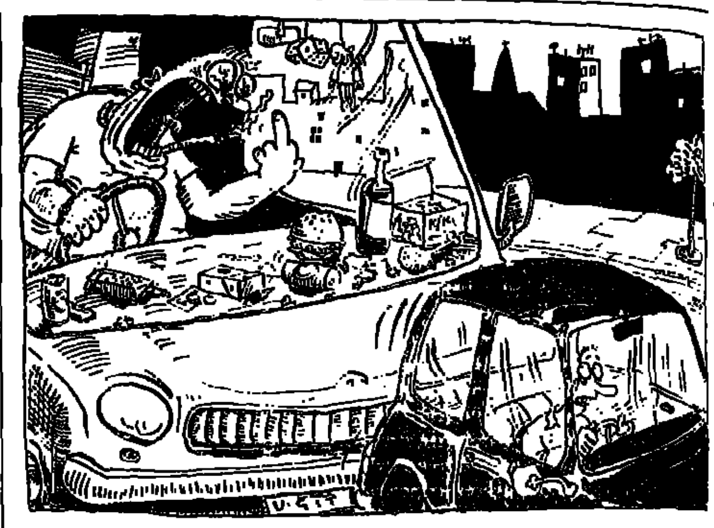
The first thing you notice is, golly, how high off the ground you are. Your head is 8ft above the planet, and even ridiculously wealthy people driving super-duper four-wheel-drives look like miserable little ants from where you're sitting. You feel you could push them off the road as easily as you could drop a chocolate bar wrapper out the window.

The second thing, and this is probably in part a function of how chippily superior the cab makes you feel, is that it is surprisingly easy to drive. The Ford Transit that I've rented is probably in better shape than 98 per cent of the other 2.2 million vans on the road. It's got power steering, any problems with the gearbox are entirely my fault, and it's nippier than you might think. In fact, as long as you don't try and do anything stupid — like parking — it's one of the best ways there is of getting around town. No wonder there are so many of them.

And, yes, there are plenty. It's funny how you become sensitised to the make of vehicle you happen to be driving. Get behind the wheel of a Vauxhall Cavalier and suddenly you notice that the roads are swarming with Vauxhall Cavaliers. Drive a 1928 Bugatti down to the shopping centre and you can't help spotting a couple in the car park. But sit in a white van and the roads become merely arteries constructed for the purposes of white vans, with one or two annoyances — what are they called again? Cars? — getting in your way every so often.

Not only are there currently 2.2 million vans on Britain's roads, some 3,000 more join them every week. So, although I am probably the only van driver in London who is busy driving a van and nothing else, and the name of the rental company is embarrassingly obvious down the back and sides, I still feel part of an enormous fraternity.

I do not even mind that much when another WVM, in a VW Transporter, cuts me up spectacularly on Stoke Newington High Street. I am conscious of the barely suppressed hatred emanating from the other


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

pygmies on the road, but what do I care? If I want to change lanes, there's nothing they can do about it.

And it is a fraternity, that's for sure. Being at the same height as other WVMs means I can take a good look at them. They can be broken down, you soon realise, into four broad categories: (a) football hooligans; (b) gangsters; (c) bouncers; (d) crazy old bastards with mad grey hair flying everywhere and a ladder on the roof. Me, I look like a football hooligan. It's enormously gratifying.

So, you begin to see where we are heading? Yes, it's our old friend, class. The big nobs at Renault are flipping out because one of the vehicles they produce seems to be being driven by — gasp — the working class. This does not fit in with the Blairite vision. Lord knows what they're going to do with their research when they get it, but it looks like they want drivers to go on Driving Awareness Courses, have them banned from making deliveries during working hours (wow, great idea for the economy), and stick those weedy "Hows [sic] my driving?" notices on the back. (Your driving is fine but your punctuation could do with some improvement.)

The Freight Transport Association, which sticks up for WVM, thinks this is condescending nonsense. Renault's research team has already found that WVM is perfectly considerate — well, sort of — especially the further you go north.

I have seen the future of van transport, and it is white van shaped. I want one, badly. And if you don't like it, you can f*** off the lot of you.

CLASSIFIED



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Beavers set to return to Scotland

THE European beaver is set to return to Britain after an absence of 400 years, *writes Gerard Seenan*.

Scottish Natural Heritage is advising the Scottish Office to launch a pilot scheme to study how beavers would cope in a British habitat after their long absence. If the study is successful, up to 1,000 beavers could be re-introduced by 2001.

Beavers were driven to extinction in Britain by man. The timid vegetarians were hunted for their fur, but also for a tiny scent gland beneath the tail.

The beaver's fondness for willow aided its downfall. The tree has analgesic properties, and as the beaver ate its way through great swaths of it, the pain-relieving chemical found in the tree would concentrate in the gland beneath the tail — the closest thing to an aspirin available at the time.

The American beaver fells large numbers of commercially grown conifers, but its European counterpart has a preference for hardwood trees. Its presence, by promoting shoots, can encourage tree growth. There is also less risk to fisheries from the European beaver since its dams are altogether smaller and less successful than those of its American cousin.


The European beaver's inferior dam-building skills will prevent it from disturbing Britain's fisheries PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN MEYERS

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF LIGHT from stars takes so long to reach us, how can we tell that they weren't extinguished long ago?

IT IS highly likely that some of the stars we see at night were indeed extinguished long ago. Stars can live for anything from millions to tens of billions of years. However, because no information can travel faster than the speed of light, we observe stars as they were in the past. This means that if the Sun (on average 500 light-seconds from Earth) were to vanish, we would not know about it until a little over eight minutes after the event.

Fortunately, the Sun is only about halfway through its life, and it is not likely to undergo any catastrophic changes for at least another few billion years. The Crab Nebula, however, is the remains of a star that exploded in a brilliant supernova (as seen from Earth and recorded by Chinese astronomers) in 1054AD. The Crab is approximately 6,500 light-years from Earth, so this means that the supernova actually "occurred" around 5500BC "Earth time". During the intervening 6,500 years (while the flash from the supernova was travelling towards Earth) prehistoric man would have been gazing at a star that in fact no longer existed. — *Alex Christie, Sofia, Bulgaria*

IF A government were elected which put the interests of people before the interests of business, how would it be prevented from governing?

BIG BUSINESS would quickly shift capital and production to more "moderate" countries, severely damaging the economy and the new government's popularity. International financial institutions would pile on the pain with trade embargoes, freezing of assets and cancellation of loans. Other Western powers, led by the United States, would declare that the nation had been taken over by a "fascist", "communist", or "extremist" clique, which was oppressing its people and sponsoring global "terrorism".

Its "appalling" human rights record (fabricated by the CIA and others) would be brought to centre stage. Political, media and academic "experts" would line up to rail against this "terrible new threat" to democracy that "must be stopped".

If all this failed to topple the government, US intelligence would develop contacts within the military, supplying them with arms and intelligence. Plans would be drawn up for a military coup. Invasion and occupation by a US-led alliance would be the ultimate resort. This would be carried out in the name of "freedom" and "democracy" — as declared by the corporate media the world over.

This is no mere speculation: take a look at the post-1945 history of Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Cuba, Haiti, Indonesia, Vietnam, Nicaragua, etc. — *David Edwards, Bournemouth*

THE LATEST UN security council resolution on Kosovo is numbered 1199. Of the previous 1198, how many have been complied with?

COMPLIANCE has different meanings relative to different countries, different time zones and different dictators. And oil. — *Jon Cina, The Hague, Netherlands*

HAS a fire station ever burned down?

AT HORNSBY, about 25km north of Sydney, Australia, the Pacific Highway makes a 90-degree right turn. At the apex of this turn there once stood The Hornsby and District Fire Brigade building, housing two fire engines, administrative offices and accommodation. Sometime in the late seventies a petrol tanker, taking the turn at speed, rolled on its side and slid into the invitingly open doors of the station, igniting an almighty conflagration, gutting the station. Miraculously no lives were lost. — *Walter Slamer, Bali, Indonesia*

WHEN I was five the fire station in my home town in the Netherlands burnt down. My father took us to watch the blaze. It kept me confused for years about the actual meaning of "fire station". — *Maarten Schim van der Loeff, Banjul, The Gambia*

Any answers?

DOES the Albanian language belong to the Indo-European grouping? If so, what are its affiliates? If not, what are its origins? — *Ann Dowling, Manchester*

WHAT is the origin of the expression "white elephant", used to describe an ambitious, but failed or redundant project? — *Brooke Goode, Damang, Ghana*

HOW long should one wait in a traffic jam before turning off the engine? — *Keith Hitchcock, Bangkok, Thailand*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. To order a copy of the latest Notes & Queries collection, 'The Last Ever' by credit card please call (+44)-1473-268 888. Price £8.99, + £1.50 p&p (Europe), £3.50 (rest of the world). Or send a cheque payable to the Guardian to: JEM Marketing, Little Mead, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8ND.

Letter from Latvia Jacqueline Karp Gendre

Salutary salutes

I POSSESS one word of Lettish, or Latvian as people say nowadays. On my way up the spire of St Peter's in the Latvian capital, Riga, I decided to try it out. No sooner had I uttered "labdien" to the aged lift operator than his arm bounced up in a welcoming fascist salute and I got the cheery reply I wanted: "Labdien". It was a success. Not that I'd expected the raised arm, but I knew my Baltics in advance, and summoned up a friendly smile.

St Peter's is a strange mix of stark Lutheran red brick and ornate renaissance façades, and from the narrow viewing platform, I gazed out at yet more of Riga's architectural contradictions. Directly below, on the banks of the Daugava, lies a maze of huddled red rooftops that form the old town; eastwards lies the ugly Soviet-style central market — originally built to house Zeppelins — and the university tower block; to the north, the wide boulevards with their splendid art nouveau mansions.

But it's not just the buildings which are a quirky mixture. The people are as well. In the centre of town, dividing old from new, is the park with its tall Freedom monument and its all too recent memories of bloodshed during the anti-Soviet uprisings in 1991. Polished granite stones commemorate the deaths of Latvian cameramen crushed by Soviet tanks.

From that direction came the sounds of a lively political meeting. It was breaking up by the time I got there, but women in headscarves were lighting candles and laying tiny bunches of wilting flowers at the foot of the monument guarded by two young soldiers. It was a poignant scene and I looked around for an interpreter who might conceivably speak something other than Latvian. I picked out a man in his 60s. I tried English. He shook his head. French. He smiled apologetically. German? That unleashed his tongue.

"The Russians deported all our young to Siberia, men, women and children, and they massacred thousands. In 1941, and again in 1949. Today, we remember our dead."

Speaking German for the first time for so many years required not only an effort but brought tears to his eyes. Taking hold of my arm, he pointed towards the ministries. The Russians were still here, he whispered. He drew back his long raincoat a little, revealing a khaki uniform with red edging. "Recognise that?" He half uncovered a medal pinned to his chest. I peered hesitantly. When he drew the coat back completely, I saw it was a tarnished swastika and gasped. Then he proudly clicked his heals, shook my hand warmly, and was gone, leaving me in a state of mild shock.

Latvia enjoyed a short-lived independence in the twenties and thirties. Then Stalin moved in and the West just watched. So Latvia — and the other Baltic states — turned for help to Hitler, who was delighted to assist, and not only occupied the country but enrolled Latvian youths in an SS unit.

To this day, many veteran SS consider themselves not fascists but freedom fighters: many continued guerrilla action long after the war. All this makes uneasy bedfellows of present-day Latvians and ethnic Russians, who accuse each other of past atrocities. Spates of recent anti-Russian bombings have been matched by threats of severe Russian trade sanctions.

I WANDERED away, across the park towards Alberta iela, famed for its art nouveau. As I admired one wedding cake facade, a woman standing in the doorway smiled. I didn't try the "labdien" opening, luckily. It's always a risk in Riga, where the majority of the population is still Russian speaking. "Russki?" she asked. This time, I was shaking my head and muttering an apology. I offered my list of language options, but to no avail. Desperately wanting to communicate something, she just flung her arms round me and laughed and wept.

Russians are the unloved of Latvia these days. Unless they were born before the second world war, they have to pass a language test to become Latvian citizens. Mafiosi can afford to buy certificates, but the majority of Russians are working-class and often out of work.

A young Russian teacher I met said: "I am ashamed to be Russian. I can't accept what we did to the Baltic peoples. And yet, I am a Russian Latvian. I belong here. People say why don't you go back home, but this is my home. I was born here. Still, Russian is my language and I will never sit the Latvian language test. Never."

The prime minister, Guntis Ulmanis, himself deported to Siberia in 1941, is more optimistic, and believes the new generation will grow up understanding each other.

The only alternative seems to be emigration. And the local English-language Baltic Times carries an ad from the Canadian government looking for prospective taxi drivers — even with a criminal record.

A Country Diary

Caroline Tocknell

SOUTH-WEST France: Autumn in Tarn-et-Garonne, is a colourful time of year. The leaves of the vines turn a bright yellow or deep red before they wither. There are browns where sunflowers and sorghum are still to be harvested, and cattle and calves continue to be grazed in green meadows.

The valley spread out in a wide panorama below us is often covered by a flat mist at sunrise, and Lauzerte, the medieval town perched on a hilltop 8km away, floats above it. A magic castle.

Creepy-crawlies are a drawback. Praying mantis, stick insects, dragon flies and large spiders are all waiting to use our house for their winter quarters. Our letter box, attached to the outside wall, is colonised by ladybirds and shield birds, which will all disappear when the frosts come. Birds on their winter migration pass overhead en route to Africa, like a skein of cranes, reminiscent of Japanese prints. Squawking wildfowl waken me on a moonlit flight south. Martins and swallows will pass through for some time yet, resting and feeding. And in early December the lapwings will arrive from northern Europe to keep us company until February.

Warm, wobbly and sadly missed

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

ARE YOU well up on vanilla slices? You can't get them any more. Not warm and fresh from the oven like a new-laid egg from the nest. Gold and white with the custard still wobbly and the icing still runny. In the first words ever heard on Coronation Street, Ena Sharples said fiercely, "Are those fancies fresh?" Freshness guaranteed, she said she'd have half a dozen *and no eclairs*. What Ena had against eclairs — apart from their slight sexual connotation — we cannot at this distance of time establish.

Someone on the production side of **Talking Heads** (BBC1) had never heard of vanilla slices. "Some question arose during rehearsal of the nature of a vanilla slice," Alan Bennett writes donnishly in his introduction to The Complete Talking Heads. "It is, I suppose, a downmarket version of a millefeuille." (He was evidently talking to BBC brass, who can relate easily to concepts like the millefeuille, not to Dame Thora Hird, whose pronunciation of millefeuille is something I would pay good money to hear.)

"Someone bringing vanilla slices back from the confectioner's, fancies too and certainly fruit pies, would bear the bag like the priest the host, high on the flat of the hand lest the fruit leak out or the icing adhere to the paper bag."

This someone was young Bennett himself, who, after Saturday dinner, would be sent to the confectioner's in Tong Road to get "something to finish off with".

A sweet tooth is what the old finish off with. Violet in Waiting For The Telegram is very old and forgets her son. "Fattish feller. Sixty-odd. Gingery 'tache. He said, 'It's Donald, mother. I'm your son.' I said, 'Bugger off'" She's had a stroke and forgets her mother tongue. Her nurse says, "You are sometimes funny with words." Which is also true of Bennett.

But she remembers Edward, whose parents kept a little confectioner's in Tong Road and always brought a vanilla slice when he came calling.

The last time he came, before leaving for France, he stripped off. "He looked a picture with the fire and all that. Not a mark on him. And he ses, 'Take your clothes off now.' And I didn't, I didn't. And I wanted him so much . . . I don't know, it was just the way I'd been brought up. And he stands there, looking down at me. And then he just picks his clothes up and he goes next door and after a bit I heard the front door bang." One way or another, men went naked to their deaths. A senile flasher came up on the stairlift, if you follow me. "He was a smartish feller. Couldn't have been more than 70. And a lovely blue suit. He could have been a bank manager, except he had no socks on. I said, 'You can put that away.' He said, 'I've got a big detached house in Harrogate.' I said, 'That's no excuse.'" Her young man died in France. Her nurse, another lovely-looking lad, dies of Aids.

Dame Thora gives a battling, heartbreaking performance. To call it award-winning seems unworthy, like pinning a medal on a hero. She is above and beyond vanity. Her hair hangs in wisps. Her face is bleached. Whether she is wearing her teeth is a matter of conjecture.

The Life of Birds (BBC1) used a shot I have seen before in a Wildlife Special. Two sea eagles, disputing territory, lock talons and whirl faster and faster, falling and falling, until they crash into the canopy of trees. Neither would loose his hold. Perhaps neither could. The same cameraman tried to film another fight for The Life Of Birds but could not match that kamikaze plunge. One war is never quite like another.

The Wench is Dead (ITV), an autumnal Morse, was disconcertingly like Josephine Tey's famous The Daughter Of Time. (The daughter of time, by the way, is truth.) Both have incapacitated detectives in hospital, feverish for mental stimulus. Using bright young researchers, both investigate old miscarriages of justice. Grant the blackening of Richard III's name; Morse a Victorian murder.

Either I am getting much cleverer, a thesis for which there is little public support, or this was a thin thing. The moment you hear the word "illusionist", your mind rushes round the room, bouncing off the walls.

Morse is, as his slangy young helper puts it, a terrific piece of retro, but, now he has cut down on the drink and taken to smiling, it is clearly all over, bar the Morse Millennium Special.

Cocteau's adorable angel

OBITUARY
Jean Marais

JEAN MARAIS, one of France's best-loved film actors, who got his break as the lover of the surrealist Jean Cocteau but was still treading the boards at the Folies Bergère last year, has died at the age of 83.

"He was an immense actor; an immense artist, but it was his qualities of loyalty, fidelity and generosity which, above and beyond the admiration he inspired in us, made us all love him so much," said President Jacques Chirac.

Best known outside France for his performance as the hairy and inconsolable beast in the 1945 classic Beauty And The Beast, Marais was rejected by all France's leading drama schools. Nevertheless he made 75 films and spent the best part of his cinema career as France's equivalent of Errol Flynn.

He later became one of the grand old men of the French theatre, but continued to attract film directors, including Bernardo Bertolucci, who cast him in Stealing Beauty, three years ago.

"He did amazing things on screen and he never trained for them," said Jean-Paul Belmondo. "He made everyone dream with those cloak-and-dagger films. But he was also truly kind. He loved people and he never took himself seriously."

Born in Cherbourg on December 11, 1913, the son of a veterinarian and a professional shoplifter, Marais moved to Paris with his mother as a young child. He was a poor student, dropping out of school at the age of 16. He worked as an apprentice photographer before he met Cocteau, the surrealist artist, playwright and film-maker, in 1937.

"It became a friendship that went far beyond the boundaries of the physical," Marais said last year. "He was the only person for whom I would sacrifice my life." Cocteau seems to have been rather more down-to-earth about the affair. "There's been a catastrophe," he reportedly said. "I've fallen in love with you."


Marais . . . French Errol Flynn PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCOIS GUENET

Their relationship inspired Cocteau to many plays, films, poems and drawings, and endured until his death in 1963. Theatrical, eccentric and visionary, Cocteau cast the strikingly handsome Marais in his play on the Oedipus story, Oedipe Roi, and the pair made half a dozen films together, including Les Parents Terribles, Orphée, in 1949, and Le Testament d'Orphée in 1960.

But Marais also worked with leading international directors such as Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti and Abel Gance, and became a major star in France for a long and hugely successful string of blood-and-thunder epics, including the Fantomas series. Later, as New Wave film-makers like Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut swept him aside, he returned to the stage, playing King Lear, Prospero and major French roles. He published several books and revealed himself to be a talented sculptor.

Jean Tiberi, the mayor of Paris, described him as an "unforgettable actor" who had "travelled through the years with exactly the same freshness and talent".

"All Paris will join me in paying him a last tribute — but he will always remain one of our dearest actors."

John Henley

Jean Marais, actor, born December 11, 1913; died November 8, 1998

The half Monty

LONDON FILM FESTIVAL
Derek Malcolm

AFTER the near disaster of last year's Keep The Aspidistra Flying, **Little Voice**, the London Film Festival's opening attraction, looks like a masterpiece. In fact, Mark Herman's first film since the highly successful Brassed Off is scarcely that.

It is a highly coloured, parodic and commendably brisk screen adaptation of Jim Cartwright's play, which gives Jane Horrocks a chance to reprise her role as the introverted girl, hooked out of a down-at-heel seaside home by a veteran showbiz con man to become a singer.

From the outset, the film plunges into the story, bringing its starry all-British cast very near to caricature right up until its mock-cathartic but feel-good ending. Apart from the admirable Horrocks, who paints the introspective young warbler in terms not far from the characters she plays in Mike Leigh films, there is Brenda Blethyn as her blowzy mother, Michael Caine as the second-rate promoter and Ewan McGregor as the shy pigeon fancier who falls for the girl. There is also Jim Broadbent as the sweaty club MC who is Caine's side-kick.

This is quite a cast but their considerable comic skills would have been better deployed on a less strident level, since the vital thing the film lacks is a balance between farce and the serious points Cartwright is trying to make about greed, exploitation and fakery.

Only once does Little Voice change into a more reflective gear, when the con man sits on the girl's bed and tells her a children's fantasy in an attempt to persuade her to escape her mundane existence. Here Caine, calling on his considerable experience, justifies his presence beyond any doubt. It is the film's one indelible moment.

At times, however, Little Voice seems so overtly anxious to please that it takes on the same faults it is trying to underline. It is as greedy for success as the con man himself and you feel that if it stopped trying to grab you by the throat so often, its grip might be considerably tighter. It does a Half Monty on us, forgetting The Full Monty's essential humanity and charm.

When Shashi Kapoor, the Indian star, left Bombay for the set of Jamil Dehlavi's **Jinnah** in Pakistan, he was attacked for going. When he arrived in Karachi, he was lambasted for coming. That's just a small part of the background to the epic English-language production which had its premiere at the festival.

There is also the controversial matter of two English actors cast as Jinnah — Richard Lintern as the young politician and Christopher Lee as the old statesman. Delhavi, who was born in Calcutta to a Pakistani father and a French mother, had his films banned in Pakistan by General Zia.

Yet all he was attempting was a radical reappraisal of the founder of Pakistan as an incorruptible, if flawed, statesman who deserves a place in history beside Gandhi.

Whether this rings true, of course, depends on the film itself. Its effect can possibly be measured by the fact that, at the director's session after the performance, a member of the audience was clapped when he said it made him proud to be a Pakistani again. For all its faults, which are certainly obvious, the attempt to rescue Jinnah from his detractors and to make sense of at least part of the jagged history of Partition is largely successful.

USING KAPOOR as the narrator, the film castigates Mountbatten, the last Governor General of India, as a man who had no love of the new Pakistan, who fiddled destructively with its boundaries and who simply wanted to get the British out of India as conveniently as possible.

It also suggests that Nehru's affair with Edwina, Mountbatten's wife, complicated matters still further, so that the course of history was shaped as much by personal antipathies between these three and Gandhi as by politics.

In attempting all this, the film adopts a straightforward narrative approach that often looks simplistic. It is safe, solid, middle-of-the-road film-making, with Lee contributing a portrait of Jinnah that goes well beyond a natural resemblance.

But it is what the film says that is more important than the way it says it. It's that kind of project: weighed down but not defeated by its subject matter.

Russia's great poet of the provinces

THEATRE
Michael Billington

IAN McKELLEN has been much mocked. His decision to abandon London for Leeds and to question the nature of white, middle-class theatre audiences has been variously seen as a sign of insanity, vanity or skilful PR. But McKellen is right to ask who goes to the theatre. And the formation of the Courtyard Company at the West Yorkshire Playhouse to stage a four-month season of plays by Chekhov, Coward and Shakespeare reminds us that without permanent troupes, serious theatre in Britain will die. Even though I wish this particular company had a longer lease, it gets off to a flying start with Jude Kelly's excellent production of **The Seagull**.

Part of its success lies in Robert Innes Hopkins's design: he has created a traverse stage which bisects the audience and brings us close to the action. No less vital is Kelly's realisation that Chekhov wrote ensemble plays for solipsistic soloists: that his characters are habituated to each other's eccentricities yet suffer from an obsession with self. It is these qualities which make them both comic and tragic.

You see this clearly in McKellen's superb performance as Dr Dorn: the family doctor on the Sorin estate. Looking like Chekhov himself, McKellen plays Dorn as a provincial Don Juan tipping his hat at a rakish Chevalier angle when people refer to his sexual prowess and even using his titfer to hide his furtive kissing of Nina. Yet McKellen shows that the obverse of Dorn's lechery is a paralysing fear of commitment: he yearns to protect his daughter Masha, yet runs in terror from her mother's demands.


Bill Bryden's Three Sisters . . . A dream-team Chekhov that fails to deliver PHOTOGRAPH: TRISTRAM KENTON

McKellen sets the tone without displacing attention from the central characters. Clare Higgins offers a maturely sensual Arkadina who relishes the role of seigneurial star actress but who is equally driven by self-absorption. She skips gaily round Konstantin when bandaging his head wound as if dancing round a maypole and, when her lover Trigorin begs for his freedom, she drags him under the table for floor-pounding sex to prove her indispensability. Higgins even makes the sudden confession that she has never read a word her son has written seem evidence less of heartless cruelty than of tragic isolation.

Every man — and woman — in Chekhov is an island: they may live in bruising intimacy with others but they rarely make spiritual contact. Two of the best demonstrations of this come from younger members of the company. Will Keen's deeply vulnerable Konstantin, in his battered panama and frayed trousers, is visibly the neglected son who pours his energy into creating unperformable attic dramas. And Clare Swinburne's exceptional Masha is a rasping alcoholic doomed to isolation: every time her loathed husband speaks she raises her eyes to heaven as if wishing him dead.

Kelly's production keeps the right Chekhovian balance between comedy and tragedy. The best news is that a genuine company, the backbone of British theatre, is beginning to take shape in Leeds. One only hopes it won't be allowed to dissolve, as so often happens, at the very moment it begins to achieve a molten unity. In life as [illegible] much of life, permanence is the best guarantee of quality.

Lyn Gardner adds: Over at the Birmingham Rep, Bill Bryden's production of **Three Sisters** is dream-team Chekhov.

Designer Hayden Griffin provides a billowing sail of gathering storm clouds as a backdrop to the sisters' house, a place where nothing but the flowers ever changes. Then there is the cast: Charles Dance, an actor with just the right mixture of charisma and self-absorption to play Vershinin, the unhappily married Commanding Officer billeted to a provincial Russian town who falls in love with the second sister Masha, played by Felicity Dean. There is more starry input from Susan Wooldridge as the prematurely middle-aged Olga with Rachel Pickup playing her fragile sister Irina.

Even the supporting cast screams quality: Eve Matheson, excellent as the vulgar Natasha; Jasper Britton as the brooding, socially impossible Solyony who takes his revenge when spurned, and Alan Cox as the kindly but doomed Barron.

It should be fantastic, but it isn't. Bryden has plenty of good ideas, not least the between-the-acts charcoal painting of the general, his wife and their three sweet-faced girls and solemn little son who stare into the future with clear eyes of confidence. You ponder it and then the figures sitting in the gloom on stage, and wonder how did they get from that to this?

There are some very fine performances, too, particularly from Dean as Masha whose final, wild-haired collapse suggests that she may well take refuge in madness from the pain of living, and David Collings as her husband Kulygin who observes his wife's betrayal but cannot stop himself from loving her too much.

In fact, it is the pitiful mixture of the ridiculous and the fragile displayed so well by Kulygin that eludes the production as a whole. This is a [illegible] Three Sisters but not a particularly comic one. It takes itself too seriously and, in so doing, makes it hard for us to take it seriously at all. Vershinin suggests that you have to believe in happiness in order to be able to live it. So, too, do you need to feel the comedy to really understand the tragedy.

Conquering the world

WORLD MUSIC
Robin Denselow

IT'S AMAZING the difference a few tins of beans can make. Ladysmith Black Mambazo have been celebrities of the South African music scene ever since they helped out Paul Simon with their stirring, growling vocal harmonies on his Graceland album, but it's only since their music was used for the Heinz TV campaign that the 10-man a cappella group has really hit the big time in Britain.

Returning to London, in the World Music line-up that forms part of this year's Oris Jazz Festival at London's South Bank, they showed how they had progressed. The dancing and choreography was slicker, there were more jokes, and some potentially embarrassing audience participation, but the harmony work was glorious as ever. They finished with a stirring version of the South African anthem, Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica, and of course the crowd adored them.

Following the success of the Cuban troupe, the Buena Vista Social Club, the Ladysmith story shows there is a potential new mass market for World Music. So who could be next? Well, there were a few contenders at the festival.

Virginia Rodrigues, who has been hailed as "the new voice of Brazil", is one. An imposing lady in her early 30s, with the physique and presence of a grand opera diva, she was born in the slums outside Salvador, in Bahia, where many descendants of African slaves have settled. She started singing in church and developed a style that has little to do with the great dance music of the region. She has an extraordinarily compelling voice but her songs are mostly formal and solemn ballads, sung either unaccompanied or with bursts of heavy drumming, violin, acoustic guitar or electric stand-up bass. Which was all very impressive, as far as it went, but greater musical variety would have been welcome.

Those desperate to dance had to cross the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, for the first British performance by the delightfully-titled Orchestra National De Barbes — named after the African and Arabic quarter of Paris. A chaotic-looking 11-piece, featuring anything from oud to brass, synthesizers and old-fashioned rock guitar, and with at least six vocalists, they played a percussive, somewhat unfocused blend of Rai and jazz that would have been far more interesting if they had got the sound balance right.

Youthful maturity

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

OVER THE past few weeks Dance Umbrella has shown British modern dance celebrating its maturity — with the 50th birthday party of choreographer Richard Alston — and Russian modern dance celebrating its infancy, with the first London appearance of the Russian group Kinetic Theatre.

Dance in Russia has been dominated by the big classical companies, and though some of these have experimented with a contemporary language, modern dance as we know it in the West hasn't taken root. Kinetic Theatre claims to be breaking the mould, and its performers combine a classical stretch and precision with an anarchic wit and energy that promise a sparky future.

If the Russians are looking forward, Alston's 50th birthday party show, with its excerpts from three decades of work, was partly looking back. Simply to read the programme, with its listings of original casts, was to feel ghosts hover. The most electrifying revival was the slow movement from Apollo Distraught (1982), a homage to Balanchine's Apollo so profligate with sculptural invention and so fraught with erotic tension that the pleasure of seeing the extract was qualified by our frustration at being denied the whole.

But it wasn't just old works on show, it was old collaborators too. Eva Karczag, whose subtle charismatic dancing inspired Alston in the early seventies, came back to perform a solo, while Alston himself braved the stage with his old mates Darshan Singh Bhuller and Siobhan Davies for the deliciously tender Dance Of The Wayward Ancients.

Alston's latest work, Waltzes In Disorder, is all about his present, youthful company, which is on ravishing form. Set to Brahms's Liebeslieder Walzer, it is specially fine in its fast and fractured group dances and in the speedy but ecstatic solos for Martin Lawrence as the free spirit evoked in the lyrics.

One of Alston's favourite dancers during the eighties was Mark Baldwin, and the latter's own show displayed a similarly open-hearted willingness to be inspired by his dancers and his music. Darkness Visible, set to piano music by Thomas Adès, is a trio which exploits the sensuous power of the women in Baldwin's company. They curve their bodies into big, generous shapes and angle them into sharp lines which glint through the choreography like shafts of wit.

In the oblique mischief of Pulcinella Disperato, the dippy, bitchy, flouncing female chorus is hilarious. Baldwin is altogether wonderful as Pulcinella, his face as hopeful and silly as a pet spaniel while his limbs propel him through the dance with their own antic wit.

Earlier this year, when Michael Clark announced his return to dance, he said there must be "a whole bunch of people" who no longer knew who he was. He was wrong. Every ticket for his brief season at London's Roundhouse could have been sold a couple of times over, and the crowd was filled not only with first-timers curious to see what the excitement had been about, but old fans who, despite Clark's four-and-a-half-year absence, had never forgotten.

During the show's opening minutes, Clark appears to be feeling his way back into the world of dance. A single bass guitarist (Susan Stenger) plays at the centre of a classically muted stage, while Clark lies prone at her feet, arching and flexing his body. Once he's up and dancing, though, we see a slightly different Clark from the beautiful fallen angel of memory. He is chunkier and stiffer, a mortal now. Yet the deep, sensual concentration in his body is even more intense, as is the tension that runs through the lines of his movement, a tension both ecstatic and introvert.

The choreography itself is a riveting mix of small detail and hard, slashing energy, and when Clark is joined by Kate Coyne, it's almost at its best. As the show's title, current/SEE, suggests, Clark is testing the water, checking out his vocabulary, and it doesn't yet have much of a concept or a structure. But even if it's not a return to his greatest form, a return it is, and an extremely welcome one.

Just say yes to Europe

A N Wilson

This Blessed Plot
by Hugo Young
Macmillan 558pp £20

IN 1975, when Britain had been a member of the Common Market for a couple of years, the Labour government held a referendum to see whether the electorate wanted to come out of it again. In Hugo Young's account of that campaign "what happened was that all the acceptable faces of British public life lined up on one side". There is something very revealing about his use of the word "acceptable". "Every Anglican bishop supported" the Common Market, he adds, as if to confirm the point.

We all know exactly who the acceptable people are. Roy Jenkins and Ian Gilmour are highly acceptable. Margaret Thatcher was a bit vulgar even in those days; but she campaigned for a Yes vote, wearing a shirt emblazoned with all the flags of the EEC countries. Barbara Castle, true to the values of the Labour party, described them all as "sanctimonious, middle-class hypocrites".

Hypocrites, because as Hugo Young is honest enough to repeat in this passionately pro-EU propaganda tract, the leaders of the Yes Campaign in that referendum deliberately lied to the electorate about the political nature of the Common Market. When asked if it meant a future political union, Ted H... Shi... and all the others coldly said no, knowing they meant yes. The polls suggested that the British public was largely indiffer-ent to the question, except in the practical area of whether the Common Market would make prices go up or down. It was left to the politically aware to work out the implications of a European Union with their acceptable friends.

You would not have expected Enoch Powell to be acceptable. He campaigned for a No vote. But only a few years before, he had advocated "the full, economic, military and political union of Europe". At that time, his fellow-Europhiles included Nick Ridley, while the arch-sceptics were to be found even on the moderate left among the likes of Denis Healey. Young is merciless in recording how often Healey changed his mind on the question, sometimes from week to week.

Waverers and doubters are usually more attractive than those who never change, whatever the circumstances. Young tries to make the out-and-out European Federalist position attractive, but he is burdened by having to admit that in order to do so his heroes have to be Roy Jenkins and Ted Heath. Indeed, he admits, "Ted Heath cannot help being the nodal figure in this story."

He speculates that if Heath had not lost the 1974 election, Europe might have been cast in a more Heath-like image. When we think of what he did to England — reducing us all to a three-day week, and abolishing the counties — would this have been a consummation so devoutly to be wished? Yet prejudice, which is usually a useful guide in politics, does not help us to make up our minds about Europe. I had been vaguely Eurosceptic for years, but during the last election campaign, I found myself moving in a much more Euro-friendly direction. Sir James Goldsmith's ... "...on the Government" made Ted Heath seem a bit more, well, nodal.

Reading Young's excellent and ...fully ... history of Britain's relationship with the whole issue over the past 50 years made me move back into a slightly more sceptical frame of mind. I feel grateful to him for telling the story so wittily and lucidly. He spells out in lively detail all the salient events since Jean Monnet and friends, just after the second world war, formed a joint Anglo-German plan for the production of coal and steel, right down to the era of Delors. Young is especially good at reminding us that nearly all the major figures in British political life in this period have changed their minds on the subject at least once: all that is, except Nodal Heath, smug Roy Jenkins and their highly acceptable friends.

Young is clearly in love with the European ideal, but he seldom stops to ask why so many people should be in doubt about "Europe". After all, Britain has been "part of Europe" since 55BC, and only very ignorant or very stupid people mind about that! What we worry about is the burden of "regulations" coming from Brussels, and the thought of what would happen if, having pooled all our gold reserves with the rest of Europe, the whole thing goes bust.

Nearly all the major figures in British politics have changed their minds on Europe at least once

In the interests of balance, Young quotes two acceptable, or formerly acceptable, people. One is the journalist Tim Garton Ash, a thoroughly sensible person, who knows Eastern Europe well, and is multilingual. Ash has come to fear that the EU as it is presently constituted is "a threat" to, rather than a guarantor of, the liberal order. Ash foresees that further "integration" will be "a threat to the greater Europe and possibly the world". Young advances nothing to contradict this view.

The other person he quotes is William Waldegrave, a Conservative who never formed part of the Eurosceptic wing of that party. By the end of this book, though, we find him suggesting that Britain comes out of the EU and becomes a sort of European Canada, independent of the great United States on its border but sharing trade and cultural links. Young commends this idea for its "intellectual honesty".

Young's history is sub-titled "Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair". It concerns itself too much with debates among the acceptable people. There is not enough about us. Yes — life in Britain is better now than it was in the sixties — plenty of good cheapish wine, nice cheeses and so forth. But would we have had these things anyway, whether or not we had joined? What about the Cornish fishermen, ruined by Common Agricultural Policy regulations? What about the closed British steel plants, which were the victims of a master plan by which the Portuguese (who had never made steel before) should make cheaper steel for the Union? What about the million and one pettifogging Brussels regulations which make life so miserable for publicans and butchers here?

Nor does Young give much time to those non-acceptable types who went bust during the Exchange Rate Mechanism, or who found that they were sitting on "negative equity". He can only talk of the "national decline" which would have resulted had not Roy Jenkins and his mates ratted on their party and voted with the Tories to enter the Common Market in 1971. Evidence of national decline? None is supplied.

The collapse of ERM and its aftermath is the greatest single reason why so many reasonable people in Britain had serious doubts about the EU. Young either cannot see ...

Of course there is something cringe-making about Little Englanders; but there is by the same token a lordly clubbishness about the acceptable people.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £17 contact CultureShop (see page 29)

Paperback fiction

Michael Pollard

Double Play, by Frank Martinus Arion (Faber, £7.99)

SET ON Curaçao, Frank Arion's 1973 novel is subtitled "The story of an amazing world record" and occurs within the parameters of a weekly game of dominoes that begins at dawn and ends, invariably, at dusk. The game, however, is more than that for the men who play it: the domino table is an arena for vexatious rivalries to come to the fore. When they do, it's in spades. Social, political and cultural issues are writ large, yet there's magic, irony and elegance, too, in this graceful Caribbean fiction.

Gabriel's Lament, by Paul Bailey (Fourth Estate, £6.99)

GABRIEL is his Mummy's pride and joy. Oswald, his father, inherits money and moves up a class to Clapham. Then Mummy disappears. Gabriel's relations with his Hogarthian father constitute the remainder of the narrative, as he moves in on himself and out of any reality orbit, nurturing and cultivating the damage done to his inchoate soul. The novel is about the insularity of a certain type of mind and the constrictions that press down upon it. It's also about the slow stripping-away of forced untruths.

Class Trip, by Emmanuel Carrère (Quartet, £6.00)

PEER PRESSURE and eroticism bear down on 10-year-old Nicholas on the annual school ski ... issues in this slim début novel. In chapters that erupt like cloudbursts, in sentences that go off like gunshots, Carrère builds to a conclusion that's abrupt — and shocking. The child's febrile imaginary world is a central metaphor, but what constitutes reality in the first place is open to question, underpinned by the fragility of the adult infrastructure that protects and supports it. It is psychologically astute and acutely spine-shiveringly chilling.

Little, by David Treuer (Granta, £6.99)

LITTLE has an extraordinary effect. On the one hand, it revolves around the arrival — then disappearance — of the strange claw-fingered child who gives the book its title and who possesses a vocabulary of just one word, "you". On the other, it's a look at Native American life that goes deeper than dump trucks and shanty homes. It's a look at life within the ghetto: a taut study of marginalisation and those who live on the furthermost edges of society and who are, in every sense, unwilling aliens.

Gravity, by Erica Wagner (Granta, £6.99)

THIS collection of stories is so damn good you may read them twice — then a third time to make absolutely sure. The airless interior of a pyramid, a Ferris wheel high above the city of Arles, an observatory on a Pacific mountainside and the plush hush of a Texas funeral parlour are some of the worlds Wagner makes strange. No self-consciously tricksy defamiliarisations for her, though. Her clear-sighted confident judgment is enough, peeling back layers of meaning like scarfskin from an onion. Stunning.

Unsteady landings

Kasia Boddy

Birds of America
by Lorrie Moore
Faber 292pp £9.99

LIKE the birds they observe living "punishing, unblessed lives, winging it north, south, here, there", Lorrie Moore's characters are constantly searching "for a place of rest". In one story a mother and daughter tour Ireland, searching for both "the past of America" and their lost innocence, while in another, two men, embarking upon an uneasy love affair, travel around the southern states and always seem to end up in cemeteries.

Birds Of America, literal and metaphorical, flit through most of the 12 stories in this, Moore's third collection. "I'm trying to get all my birds to land in the same yard," says one character, but this is usually a vain ambition. The landings that are achieved generally turn out to be unwelcome or at best precarious.

Predatory crows shriek in the backyard of Aileen, who can't come to terms with the death of her cat, and also of Ruth, whose restlessness has "come falsely to rest" in a dream-gone-wrong house and who has to resort to a gun. Only in the final story, "Terrific Mother", do birds augur well. Adrienne, grazed by a cockatiel as she leaves her masseuse, begins to feel a bit better about her life.

In the title story of Moore's previous collection, Like Life, a woman is told that she has pre-cancerous cells in her throat. "Pre-cancer," she says — "Isn't that . . . like life?" Illness and death (in particular cancer) have always hovered at the edges of Moore's stories, but never perhaps as painfully as in the penultimate story here, in which a mother comes to terms with her baby's cancer. The story turns into a meditation on linear narrative ("A beginning, an end: there seems to be neither") and the power of wit and the imagination to console.

Wit has always been the first weapon that Moore's characters reach for in their defence against pain, and they are experts at bad puns and slips of sound and sense. "Goodbye" becomes "could cry", "paediatric oncology" is easier as "Peed Onk".

Chosen as one of Granta's Best Young American Novelists in 1996, and the author of two novels, Anagrams (1986) and Who Will Run The Frog Hospital? (1994), Moore is often praised for an ability to combine a brittle verbal brilliance and a never-sentimental compassion. "Every arrangement in life," thinks Agnes, "carried with it the sadness, the sentimental shadow, of its not being something else, but only itself." This is also the guiding principle of Anagrams, in which the shadows of other possible lives co-exist. Frog Hospital, on the other hand, is much more a conventionally well-made novel, an almost ordinary coming-of-age tale. The short story, however, is where Moore excels — partly because her self-conscious playfulness is at its best in small, mordant doses, but also because it suits her sense of life's fragile contingency and her scepticism about large and lasting truths. "'Get a Job,' she shouted silently to God. 'Get a real Job.'"



Lorrie Moore . . . Wit is her characters' first weapon and the short story her natural home

Pieces of eight

Steven Rose

Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms
Essays on Natural History
by Stephen Jay Gould
Jonathan Cape 405pp £17.99



STEVE GOULD is a phenomenon. Harvard professor, distinguished palaeontologist, no stranger to controversy both within his professional terrain and over the wider implications of evolutionary theory for understanding of human nature, he has for many years written monthly essays for the American magazine Natural History.

This is the eighth in a series of collections of these essays, each of which, with increasingly enigmatic titles, has in turn featured in the science best-sellers list on both sides of the Atlantic. There is little reason to doubt that Leonardo's Mountain will achieve the same accolade. The only comparison, in range and style, is with the great British Marxist geneticist J B S Haldane's regular columns in the Daily Worker in the thirties and forties.

Would Gould welcome the comparison? His and Niles Eldredge's evolutionary theory of "punctuated equilibrium", according to which, far from being steady and gradual, the fossil record revealed long periods of stasis interspersed with phases of rapid change, was attacked by some Darwinians as revolutionary in the seventies and eighties. Indeed the charge of Marxism — if charge it be — is still tossed around by those who dispute his science or envy his writing success. A savage polemic is now raging around the current pretensions of so-called evolutionary psychology, and Gould has fully engaged himself in it.

Despite this, and what must be a temptation to use his Natural History pulpit to respond to the ill-temper of his critics, the essays in Leonardo's Mountain, like those in the earlier collections, are uniformly good-natured.

A measure of the tone of the book is provided by Gould's account of a meeting of the Pontifical Academy in Rome, at which he was challenged to explain why US fundamentalist Christians were obsessed with so-called "creation science". The Catholic priests who interrogated him found no problems with endorsing evolutionary theory. Gould uses this as a peg to discuss what he sees, though others may not, as the necessary separation of science and faith. This is but one of a series of chapters which are essentially pleas for tolerance and a recognition of the unity of humanity. Despite the atrocities of the historical record (from the aftermath of the Diet of Worms to the genocide of the original populations of the Caribbean islands and Latin America), he argues, the rich outpourings of human creativity mean that one need not subscribe to the brutal pessimism about the nature of human nature shown by some evolutionary theorists.

The essays range from reflections on science and art and reprises of past controversies in biology to the recovery of little known figures in the history of evolutionary studies. Gould is most proud, he says, of the title essay on Leonardo, and it is indeed a fascinating re-evaluation of just why this great artist was obsessed by fossil clams. Not, as one might have imagined, because the inventor of helicopters and submarines also presaged Darwin, but, Gould argues, because he needed to interpret their presence within the mystical view of universe and humans as macrocosm and microcosm, in each of which earth, air, fire and water were combined in continuous circulation. Leonardo ... renaissance man.

What fascinates Gould throughout this series is how the observer's perspective helps determine what is seen and how it is interpreted.

Leonardo's clams must move upwards because water must rise in the macrocosm as it does in the microcosm. Early cave paintings must be more primitive than later ones. Fossil horses must form an evolutionary series. Sometimes the right conclusion for the wrong — or what we now perceive as wrong — reason; sometimes meticulous observation shoehorned into an impossible theoretical frame. For Gould nature speaks, but only through its interpreters.

It it is this oscillation between deep theory, baroque detail and personal reflection which makes Gould's writing so pleasurable. In the introduction he pledges to continue the series into the millennium. More power to his elbow. In the meantime read, learn from and enjoy these "pieces of eight".

Karl Marx in a brown shirt

Norman Stone

Hitler (Volume 1)1889-1936: Hubris
by Ian Kershaw
Penguin Press 845pp £20

IS THERE anything new to say about Hitler? Ian Kershaw is an expert in the field, writes decently and covers all the possible sources (there are no fewer than 200 pages of notes). His book starts with a lengthy explanation of how a new biography might be justified, given that, in polite academic society, biographies are still not really an acceptable genre. No one outside academe will worry very much about this: you cannot imagine the thirties without Hitler; he made the rightwing takeover of the German state possible — no one else could have done it.

Parties of the extreme right usually fall apart into squabbling groupuscules: this happened with the German anti-Semitic parties in the 1880s, and it happened again with extremist parties in the 1920s. Hitler, by contrast, kept his party together, waiting for the right moment. How? One answer was ideology: Hitler was the Nazi Marx. But he was also the Nazi Lenin, because he could browbeat any would-be "splitter".

Hitler also supplied the party's finances, because he was a speaker for whom people would pay good money, as innumerable witnesses attest. He was one of the few funny speakers in German public life. If you make jokes in Germany, even now, you risk not being taken seriously. Most public speakers then were either professorial or rabble-rousing; Hitler could manage both.

Finally, although this is outside the span of Kershaw's first volume, Hitler was the party's Stalin, too, increasingly radicalising things. In 1938 he might just have stopped, and become what Mussolini, at one stage, was trying to be — an elder statesman. Instead, he plunged on, expecting to make Germany a world power. (Ideas of a united Europe belong, incidentally, to that period, common currency and all.)

Marxist attempts to explain Hitler's rise do not work. It used to be argued that he was driven on to foreign conquest because of problems at home. At its most absurd, this argument was pushed forward by Tim Mason, who claimed that the Nazis were immiserating the working classes and needed an empire to de-miserate them. Kershaw sometimes uses Mason's evidence to show that, for instance, in 1935 the working classes were becoming fed up with the queues, the lack of sugar and so on, which attended Nazi rule. But he also notes that Hitler's economic programme, based on increased public spending, was extraordinarily successful — unemployment was falling rapidly. It was the confidence Hitler gained from an economic recovery which he himself barely understood that led him to think he could do no wrong.

Hitler started off as a poor bum-bler in pre-war Vienna, not knowing where he was going. After a false start in 1923, he found that the forbidding citadels all around were empty. The German right, the German left, the League of Nations were all nonsense on stilts. In the period covered by Kershaw, you can see Hitler's confidence gradually increasing. To start with, he maintained the apparatus of the German state, but by 1935 he had become bored with it, almost never holding cabinet meetings and even forbidding his ministers to meet informally. Hitler, himself a journalist of some talent, thought in terms of headline-grabbing, and guessed that the confidence which headlines could give would in itself cause an economic recovery.

HITLER is so central to inter-war Germany that a biographical approach ... there are severe difficulties. There was no Hitler family to speak of; no one ever got really close to him; and Hitler's sex-life is largely a mystery. Kershaw has dealt with the difficulties adroitly, and by channelling the enormous flood of new research on his subject, particularly on popular responses to Hitler, his book has earned its place.

The only suggestion I would make is perhaps an uncomfortable one. Having decided to make a huge first volume of the years 1889-1936, Kershaw will find it difficult to confine the years 1937-45 to one similar volume. Hitler was omnipresent in both peace and war, and a proper treatment will require considerable space. So, I fear, we will need two more volumes, not one. I shall not regret this: some subjects require endless, and boundless, re-reading.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £17 contact CultureShop (see below)

Ted Hughes in line for posthumous Whitbread prize

Dan Glaister

JUST over a week after his death, Ted Hughes was again nominated for the Whitbread Poetry Award. Last year he won the award and went on to win the overall Whitbread Book of the Year award for his translation of Tales From Ovid.

The Whitbread offers awards for best novel, first novel, biography and poetry collection. The winner of each category goes on to compete for the Book of the Year award, to be announced at the end of January. A separate children's book of the year award is also announced.

The major surprise in the nominations was the absence of any of the established novelists from the Booker Prize shortlist, the only author to make both shortlists is Magnus Mills, the debut writer and bus driver, for his novel The Restraint Of Beasts.

Author Deborah Moggach, one of the judges for the best novel category, said: "Our long list of 15 books didn't include a single one of the Booker shortlist.

"It is a very good curative to the enormous hype around the Booker for people to realise that those aren't the definitive books of the year."

Although the Whitbread judges, unlike the Booker judges, do not have to read every book submitted — instead they divide the task between them — Moggach admitted that she was exhausted.

"I only had to read 55 books so I'm not in such a state of catatonic exhaustion as the Booker judges, but I'm never going to read anything in my life again."

Her remarks echo those of the chair of this year's Booker panel, Lord Hurd, who called for a reform in the way the shortlist is selected. This year the Booker judges each read 125 books. Lord Hurd referred to the system as "a surfeit, not a feast".

Ted Hughes was nominated for Birthday Letters, published earlier this year which for the first time gave a detailed account of his relationship with his late wife, the writer Sylvia Plath.

Also in the poetry section is Philip Gross's The Wasting Game, an account of his daughter's struggle with anorexia, and Paul Farley's acclaimed debut The Boy From The Chemist Is Waiting To See You, which won this year's Forward Prize for best first collection.

The biography section is also strong, with nominations for John Bayley's moving account of his wife Iris Murdoch's life with Alzheimer's disease, Ian Kershaw's acclaimed biography of Hitler (reviewed above), the first English language biography of Hitler for 20 years, is nominated, as is Amanda Foreman's account of the life of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.

The best first novel section includes the semi-autobiographical Jellyroll by Luke Sutherland, the story of a black musician in a white jazz band touring the Scottish Highlands. Gavin Kramer, author of Shopping, is a lawyer working in Fleet Street, while Giles Foden, author of The Last King Of Scotland, is the Guardian's deputy literary editor.

The three novels in the best novel category are The Catastrophist by Ronan Bennett, Justin Cartwright's Leading The Cheers, and Barbara Trapido's The Travelling Hornplayer.

The winners of each category will be announced on January 13. The overall winner will be revealed on January 26.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 22 1998

Sticking up for old boars

Paul Evans

IN AUSTRALIA arguments rage about the proposed slaughter of 4 million kangaroos, the world's largest cull of wild animals. Farmers complain that roos are a threat to crops and are spreading disease. The often illegal hunting of these animals, where the fittest are taken, leaves weaker individuals prone to viral disease, which is affecting millions of individuals.

Not surprisingly, conservationists and animal welfare groups are outraged and are calling for a moratorium on hunting. One impassioned campaigner appeared on television, arguing that kangaroos belonged to the world, and that we should intervene on their behalf. But before British conservationists respond, I would urge them look at what is happening in our own backyards.

The growing UK hit-list of wild animals — which includes badgers, deer, grey squirrels, ruddy ducks and mink — has recently had the wild boar added to it. Once as emblematic of British forests as the kangaroo is of the Australian outback, the wild boar became extinct in the wild during the Middle Ages.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

A small number remained in fenced enclosures around the country as a beast of the chase, but although notoriously difficult to keep fenced in, they never managed to survive in sufficient numbers to breed in the wild.

In recent [illegible] bers in captivity have increased, due to their emergence as a novelty food item. During the great storm of 1987, winds and fallen trees broke fences on wild boar farms in the south of England and some escaped. For the past 12 years or so they have re-colonised woods, minding their own business and breeding successfully, perhaps for the first time in 700 years.

The Ministry of Agriculture estimates there are about 120 wild boar at large in the south of England. However, organisations concerned with pig-breeding claim there may be hundreds more roaming the countryside and that they pose a threat to domestic pigs through disease, and a risk to public safety. The government has also been warned [illegible] the population could multiply five-fold in the next five years.

Genetically, wild boar are quite distinct from domestic breeds. They are large, powerful animals, and can be dangerous if cornered — although there have been no reports of anybody being attacked. Nevertheless farming interests are calling for a cull, using high-powered rifles. Although the Government has not yet decided what to do, the anticipated slaughter has been described with relish by one newspaper as the "biggest wild boar hunt in England since the Middle Ages".

Many European countries have large populations of wild boar living close to large populations of people, but then they have more forest than we do. The reason for this is because wild [illegible] ploughs — they liberate dormant seeds of wildflowers, reduce bracken and give the processes of natural regeneration a kick-start. If we want help in regenerating our woodlands, we should be encouraging their return and allowing them the freedom to recolonise woodland further afield.

The hysterical pig-sticking in the press is being whipped up by the ignorance and self-interest of the land-owning and farming lobby, which sees anything wild as a threat to their livelihood. And, as in Australia, theirs is a livelihood the rest of us pay dearly for.

Chess Leonard Barden

VISHY Anand really ought to challenge Garry Kasparov for his world title after the Indian's latest success at Fontys Tilburg, where he led all the way. Apart from his stutter at Dortmund, Anand has dominated recent élite events and is closing in on Kasparov at the top of the Fide rankings.

Meanwhile the ever-receding Fide world championship at Las Vegas has been postponed until the end of next year, which pushes Czech Telecom's $3 million bid for a unified world title well into 2000. Kasparov wants a match; he hasn't defended since 1995, when he beat a less experienced Anand in New York. And though a unity series may happen if a big name like Adams, Kramnik or Polgar wins in Las Vegas, what if the unstable knockout system throws up Rublevsky, Krasenkov or the unpronounceable Zvjaginsev? What if the Fide event and its Russian sponsor fall victim to the fading rouble?

Thanks to Anand, chess is a major sport in India, and he is a role model to his nation's talented children. Indians won boy and girl world under-10 titles in 1996 and 1997 and were again among the leaders in the 1998 championships that ended recently in Spain.

It's surely time for the Indian government and sports ministry to launch a bid. Even if half the match was played in Europe, eight or ten games in Delhi, Calcutta or Anand's home city Madras would be a massive sell-out and bring global publicity for the country where chess began. There's also a long tradition in chess — in 1907, 1910, 1921, 1929, 1935 and most recently in Kasparov v Short 1993 — of title matches played on the challenger's soil, provided his compatriots can raise the money.

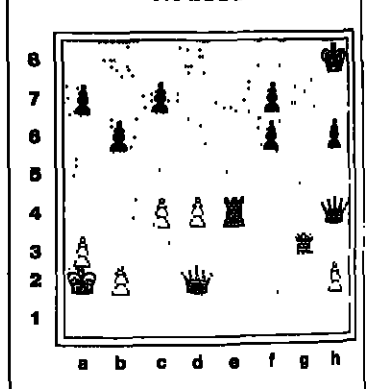
Why should this writer's opinion matter? Because the Guardian and the Guardian Weekly have a large and influential circulation in India, where this column is also syndicated. Almost a quarter of the near-record entry for our last annual chess puzzle came from Indian readers. So, dear friends, demand support from your politicians, business chiefs and media for this is a match the world wants.

V Anand v V Korchnoi, Tilburg

1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 c5 5 cxd5 cxd4 6 Qxd4 Nxd5 7 e4 Nxc3 8 Qxc3 Nc6 9 a3 Bd7 10 Be2 Rc8 11 0-0 Na5 12 Qd3 Ba4 13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 Be3 Nb3 15 Bd1! One simple move refutes Black's opening strategy based on 15 Rad1? Bc5 with good chances to simplify and draw. **b5 16 Bxb3 Bxb3 17 Rfc1 e5** If Be7 18 Nd2! wins at least a pawn. **18 Nxe5 a6 19 Nc6 Resigns.** If Rd7 20 Na5 Be6 21 Rc6 wins a second pawn, after which White can mop up.

Ruth Sheldon won the world girls under-18 championship for England with 9/11 earlier this month. Saitek's £10,000 coaching support proved a great success.

No 2550



Utut Adianto v Vadim Milov, Biel 1994. White (to move) won against Black's best defence by a neat five-move sequence. Black has little choice so I thought this was fairly easy until I tried it on 9-year-old Murugan who recently drew with a GM. He found it hard and took two hours, so see how your own skills (or those of your talented child) compare.

No 2549: 1 Kg6 b3 2 Kf5 Bb2 3 Ke4 Nc3+ 4 Kd3 0-0-0 mate.

Quick crossword no. 445

Across

1 Close-in cricket fielder (5,3-3)
9 Vetoed (9)
10 Fuss (3)
11 Recess (5)
13 Kind of battery with non-liquid electrolyte (3-4)
14 Please (anag) — pass by (6)
15 Of the flesh — sensual (6)
18 Many-sided figure (7)
20 Under (5)
21 Religious female (3)
22 Expensive, opulent (9)
24 Show — protest (11)

Down

2 Anger (3)
3 Bounty (7)
4 Disease (6)
5 Tricky — dangerous — difficult (5)
6 Brotherly (9)
7 Bedspread (11)
8 Sophisticated (7-4)
12 Dare (9)
16 Referee (7)
17 Intense dislike (6)
19 Zest (5)
23 Striking — unconscious — dismissed (3)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

I IMAGINE we all have particular opponents at the bridge table whom we can't stand. It may be because they're rude, unethical and overbearing — or perhaps it's because we always seem to hold inferior cards or make foolish blunders when we play them. Not unnaturally, we find it harder than usual to concentrate against our *bêtes noires*, weakening our play still further. But, by the same token, there is no sweeter triumph than when we finally manage to beat them.

A maxim I first learned in Australia says that whenever you have a two-way finesse to take, in a position such as:

♠AJ10
♠K65

you should always finesse through the opponent you dislike most. This way, if the finesse wins, you'll be one up on the enemy; if it loses, you won't have lost to the opponent who gloats afterwards. A variation on this theme came up in a deal from rubber bridge recently. This was my hand:

♠KJ65 ♥K4 ♦A103 ♣A1054

I opened the bidding with a strong no trump, and the auction went like this:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♦(1)	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠(2)	Pass	6♥(3)	Pass
Pass	Pass		

(1) A transfer bid, showing a heart suit.
(2) Showing where my values lay — if partner was worried about the spades, it could be right to play in 3NT.
(3) He had a train to catch!

West, a particularly unpleasant opponent, led the king of diamonds, and my partner put down this dummy:

♠Q104 ♥AJ10987 ♦None ♣KQJ9

Six clubs would have been a fine contract, but it was too late for that now. In six hearts, I would need to avoid losing a trick to the queen of trumps. The normal play would be to lay down the king, in case of a singleton queen with East, then finesse against West. Playing for the drop, or playing East for the queen, offer much inferior odds.

I was about to make the percentage play when I looked up, and saw that West was glaring at me with more than his usual venom. Why would he be doing that? Of course, if his heart holding was ♥Qxx, he might resent the fact that I was about to make a lucky slam. On the other hand, this West was un-scrupulous enough to be pretending to hold a "doomed" queen of hearts — after all, I might have ♥Kxx, when he would wish to encourage me to finesse through his hand and not play for the drop.

Have you decided yet what you would do? This was the full hand:

North
♠Q104
♥AJ10987
♦None
♣KQJ9

West
♠873
♥653
♦KQJ97
♣83

East
♠A92
♥Q2
♦86542
♣762

South
♠KJ65
♥K4
♦A103
♣A1054

Which play did I make? Well, I can tell you one thing. Unlike West, I'm still smiling!

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

End of an era

THE CURTAIN finally came down on a great footballing era last week when Roy Evans parted company with Liverpool after nearly 33 years of unbroken service as player, coach and manager.

With him went the last of the "Shankly Boys" who between them won 10 championships and four European Cups to make Liverpool Britain's most successful club. After learning his trade alongside such legends as Bill Shankly, Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan and Kenny Dalglish, Evans was appointed Liverpool manager in January 1994 following the resignation of Graeme Souness.

Roy Evans . . . 33 years' service

Sadly, despite his loyal service, his reign was not an unqualified success, yielding as it did only one trophy — the 1995 League Cup after a 2-1 victory over Bolton Wanderers. In July, the Merseyside club waved goodbye to the so-called boot room tradition of promoting from within by appointing Gérard Houllier, the former French national team coach, to share managerial responsibilities with Evans.

Evans's departure signaled the abandonment of the twin-manager experiment by the club and the onset of a new dawn as Houllier was handed sole responsibility to recapture the former glories for Liverpool, who were eliminated from the Worthington Cup last week and are struggling in the bottom half of the Premiership.

He is the first foreigner to have full control at Anfield in the club's 106-year history. Phil Thompson, the former Liverpool and England defender, has been named as his assistant.

Another stalwart to sever links with his Premiership club was Peter Schmeichel. He will be saying farewell to top-flight English football at the end of the season after keeping goal for Manchester United for more than seven years.

Schmeichel, 35 this week, said the rigours of English football were taking too much toll on his body. A move to a foreign club in order to prolong his career cannot be ruled out. He has helped the Reds to win 12 major trophies during his time, and Alex Ferguson, the manager, acknowledged the significance of the Danish international's contribution. "Peter has been a model professional who has inspired and influenced everyone," he said.

Australian Mark Bosnich, available on free transfer from Aston Villa in June, is said to be Ferguson's preferred choice as successor to Schmeichel.

LEE WESTWOOD captured the Taiheiyo Masters title at Gotemba, Japan, to become the first golfer to win the tournament three years running. The Briton, for whom it was a sixth title of the season and the 12th of his career, won by two shots from Masashi Ozaki, who shot a best-of-the-day five-under 67 for a 13-under total of 275. Westwood banked $175,000 for his work.

A TRIPLE whammy for Greg Rusedski. The No 2 of British tennis failed to qualify for the lucrative ATP Championship in Hanover later this month. He lost out after Yevgeny Kafelnikov, needing to win his home tournament in Moscow to clinch the eighth and final place, duly defeated Goran Ivanisevic 7-6, 7-6. Rusedski, who was beaten 7-5, 7-6 by Sweden's Thomas Johansson in the Stockholm Open, also lost his chance to be in the top 10 at the end of the year and to reclaim the British No 1 spot from Tim Henman, who will be the only Briton in Hanover.

KENNY DALGLISH, who made 324 appearances for Celtic as a footballer, and Jim Kerr, lead singer of Simple Minds, head a consortium aiming to take over the top Scottish club. They reportedly seek to take control at the Glasgow club in a $230 million buy-out with backing from the City.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal 0, Tottenham 0; Charlton 1, Middlesbrough 1; Chelsea 3, Wimbledon 0; Coventry 3, Everton 0; Liverpool 1, Leeds 3; Man Utd 3, Blackburn 2; Newcastle 1, Sheff Wed 1; Nottm Forest 2, Derby 2; Southampton 1, Aston Villa 4; West Ham 3, Leicester 2.
Leading positions: 1, Aston Villa (played 12-points 28); 2, Man Utd (12-25); 3, Arsenal (13-24).

Nationwide League
First Division
Barnsley 0, Ipswich 1; Birmingham 0, Oxford 1; Bolton 2, Tranmere 2; Bradford C 3, Swindon 0; Crewe 0, QPR 2; C Palace 2, Bristol C 1; Grimsby 1, Portsmouth 1; Norwich 0, Wolves 0; Port Vale 0, Sunderland 2; Sheffield U 3, Bury 1; Stockport 1, Watford 1; WBA 3, Huddersfield 1.
Leading positions: 1, Sunderland (18-40); 2, Ipswich (18-35); 3, Watford (19-32).

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Dundee 1, Kilmarnock 1; Dunfermline 2, Dundee Utd 1; Motherwell 3, Hearts 2; Rangers 2, Aberdeen 1; St Johnstone 2, Celtic 1.
Leading positions: 1, Rangers (14-30); 2, Kilmarnock (14-24); 3, Celtic (14-20).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
First Division
Ayr 4, Clydebank 1; Falkirk 1, Raith 1; Morton 0, Airdrie 0; Hamilton 1, Stranraer 2; Hibernian P, St Mirren P.
Leading positions: 1, Ayr (15-29); 2, Hibernian (14-29); 3, Airdrie (15-27).

Second Division
Arbroath 2, Livingston 2; Clyde 2, Alloa 1; East Fife 1, Forfar 0; Queen Sth 2, Inverness CT 2; Stirling Alb 2, Partick 0.
Leading positions: 1, Livingston (15-34); 2, Inverness CT (15-33); 3, Clyde (15-25).

Third Division
Albion 3, East Stirling 1; Berwick 3, Cowdenbeath 1; Dumbarton 1, Brechin 2; Montrose 0, Stenhousemuir 0; Ross Co 5, Queens Park 1.
Leading positions: 1, Ross County (15-33); 2, Brechin (15-33); 3, Stenhousemuir (15-27).

Cricket Tour match

Victory boost for England

NOT SO MUCH from the jaws of defeat as halfway down its gullet, England snatched a remarkable victory over Queensland, *writes Mike Selvey in Cairns*. With five wickets down for 74 overnight, they needed a further 68 runs on Sunday on a heavily cracked pitch. The game seemed well and truly up when the ninth wicket fell at 106.

Then a remarkable transformation followed as Robert Croft and Alan Mullally eked out a partnership that, run by run, over by over, brought England to the brink and finally to victory. The win was secured in the sixth over after lunch, when Croft pushed a single off Michael Kasprowicz, whose inspired bowling had threatened to steamroller England.

The boost to the England effort by the last two matches has been incalculable. In Adelaide, it was Graham Thorpe and Mark Ramprakash who constructed an unbroken record fifth wicket partnership of 377 to save a game that seemed doomed.

Here, the last ditch alliance actually won the day. Earlier, Queensland had made 209 in their first innings to which the visitors replied with 192. England's bowlers skittled out the home side for 124 second time round, but the tourists quickly found themselves struggling again.

Football Premiership: Southampton 1 Aston Villa 4

Dublin faces sterner tests

Martin Thorpe at the Dell

THE name on everyone's lips was, naturally, Dion Dublin. But those seeking a more accurate yardstick for Villa's title aspirations should perhaps think of London, Manchester or Liverpool.

In the next 28 days Arsenal, United and Anfield's currently palsied crew will dock at Villa Park for the first time this season, and it is the result of these three games rather than the five goals in the new striker's first two starts which is likely to offer a firmer fix on Villa's championship hopes.

This is not to detract from Dublin's achievements. Villa's new $9.5 million signing has added potency to the cause, but an opportunist punisher of lax defending is not going to win every match, especially against Arsenal and United.

As John Gregory looks to turn a club-record start of 12 League games undefeated into Villa's first championship trophy since 1981, these fixtures will test his side's other qualities. So it should be noted that there was a period in this match when the Premiership leaders were more than matched by the side languishing at the bottom.

After Dublin opened the scoring with a header after just two minutes, Villa struggled to find the invention to shake off Southampton's pressing game. They kept possession for long periods but too often were forced backwards to do so, despite the chirpy midfield promptings of Lee Hendrie.

Villa were perhaps thankful that Southampton equalised, the goal crafted and scored by the wonderfully jinking feet of Matthew Le Tissier eight minutes into the second half. With thoughts of beating the leaders driving their play, Dave Jones's players surged forward on the attack. Within two minutes Ugo Ehiogu's attempted clearance from the impressive Stuart Ripley's cross whacked the Villa bar, encouraging Southampton to believe that this was the perfect tactic.

But in reality the Saints had merely forgotten their status — and their plan. In piling forward "they left the back door open again", bemoaned the beleaguered Jones. Villa took full advantage. Good penetrating runs from midfield helped restore the visitors' lead, Dublin putting the ball past Paul Jones from 20 yards.

Goal No 3 was sparked by Gareth Barry's quick ball out of defence to Stan Collymore, whose equally quick pass to Paul Merson was swept home by the England forward, and the fourth came near the end when Ehiogu nodded down Hendrie's corner, and Dublin flicked the ball home for his hat-trick.

● Graham Bean, a 37-year-old policeman who is also chairman of the Football Supporters' Association and a member of the Government's Football Task Force, has been appointed as a "sleaze buster" by the Football Association, which is trying to crack down on growing disciplinary problems. Mr Bean will give up all three roles when he starts his new job on January 4 on a three-year contract after 18 years with the police. His official remit is to oversee issues of financial irregularities, drug abuse, racism, violent play and general misconduct.

Cryptic crossword by Plodge

Across

1 Draw level, talking posh? What sauce! (7)
5 Thorough physical exam with artist replacing setter (7)
9 Bill's occupation is riveting (9)
10 Singular expression for a bit of bread (5)
11 First (initial) offer already written! (4)
12 Cross off make-up man taking the foreign subject for 9? (10)
14 Time off with a couple of fifties? Chicken feed! (6)
15 Me? Blurt "Off to the guillotine!"? (7)
16 Ready money, say, for spaceship in Asia (7)
18 Model for the stars? Your first error, silly! (6)
20 Not the first job for late arrivals (6,4)
21 An aural virus was in the air (4)
24 Stir up squabbles, by the sound of it (5)
25 Former players, by the way, were drunk (9)
26 Of love they're free (7)
27 Certain coppers, indeed! (7)

Down

1 Hue and cry for something to start a Fiesta, perhaps (5)
2 Inter-ministerial limits? (7)
3 Grass contains heroin? (4)
4 See 5 down
5,4 The Tressell novel shored up old painters' rights? Great! (6,9,15)
6 Doctor's ER medic admitted West Coast City Ranters (10)
7 Little Bighorn loser took Latin mass (7)
8 Broadminded house-party? (7)
13 Versailles negotiator Attlee cut off cold water abroad (10)
16 Bird-fancier Koestler had nothing to lose (7)
17 Caught with Latin in ascending transport? Give in! (7)
19 Player swapping ends revived . . . (7)
22 . . . United getting silver? You bet . . . (5)
23 . . . Bobby, centre-forward, nobbled the Italian back (4)

Last week's solution